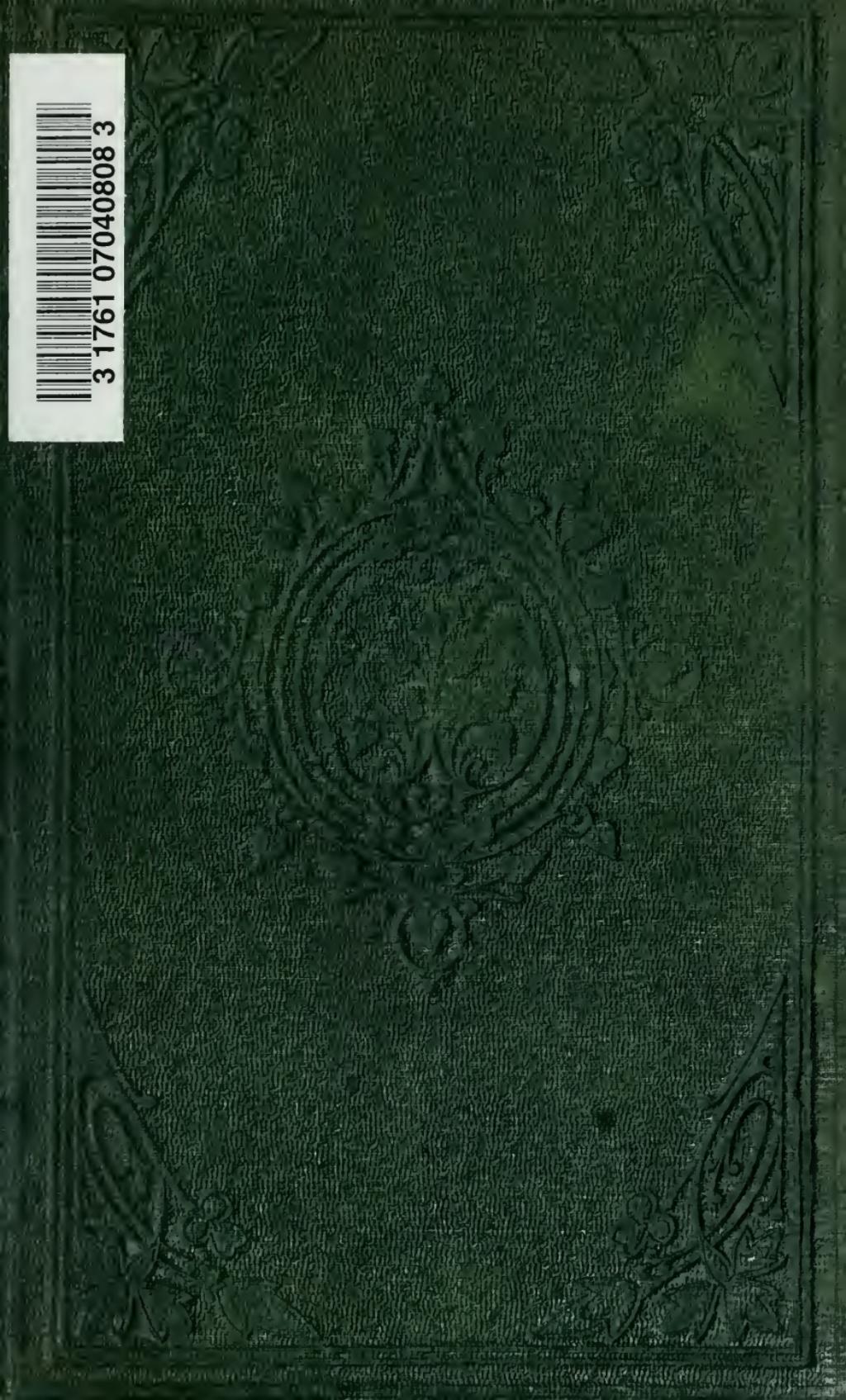




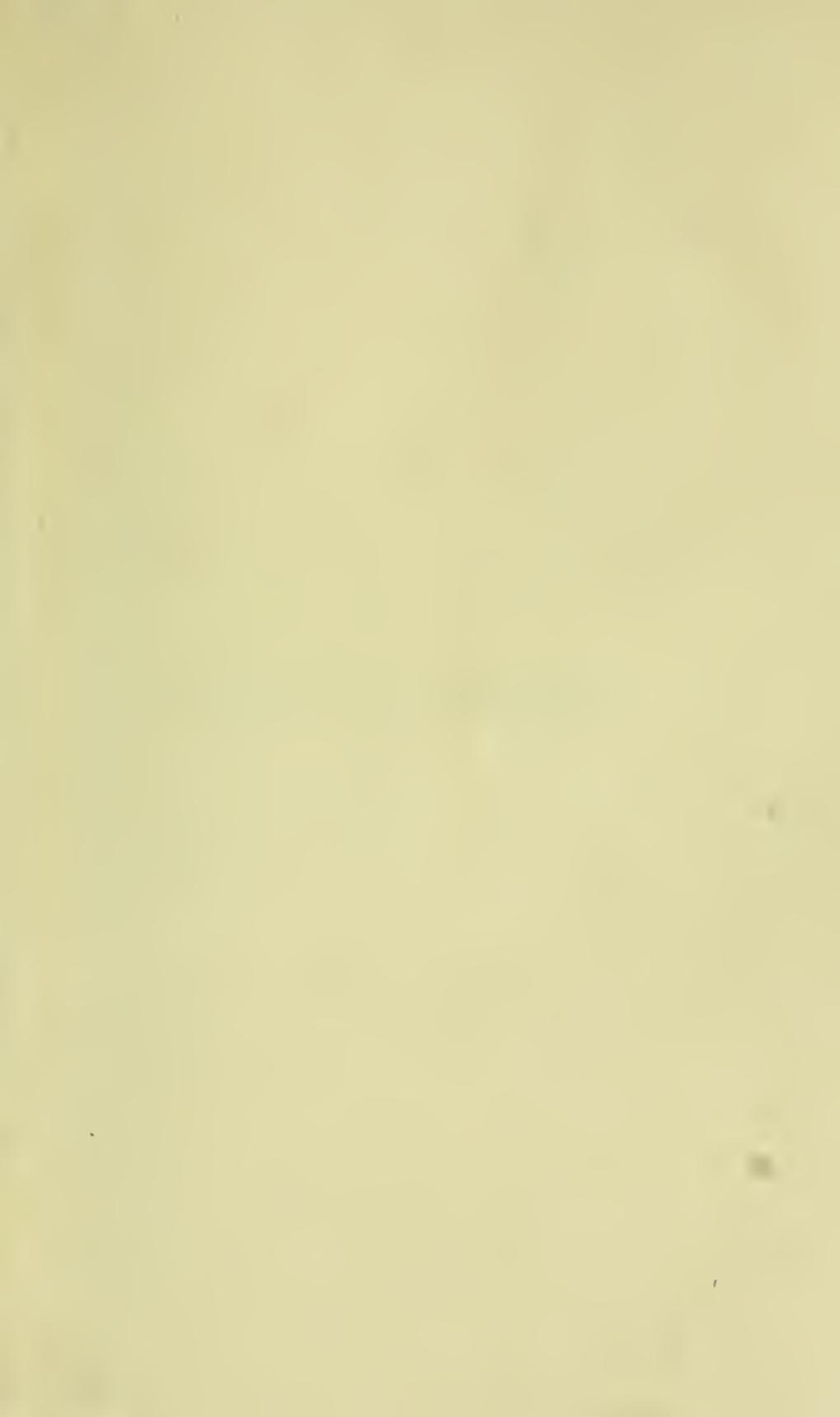
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A

VACATION IN BRITTANY.



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A Vacation in Brittany

A

VACATION IN BRITTANY.

BY

CHARLES RICHARD WELD,

AUTHOR OF '*A VACATION TOUR IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA.*'

With Illustrations.

"The sounding cataracts, the moss-grown rocks,
The mountains, and the deep and gloomy woods,
Their colours and their forms, are still to me
An appetite, a feeling, and a love."—WORDSWORTH.

LONDON:

CHAPMAN AND HALL, 193, PICCADILLY.

1856.

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Dinan.

CHAPTER I.

PLEASANT ANTICIPATIONS.—PREPARATIONS FOR THE TOUR.—BRITANNIA AND ARMORICA.—THE MODERN BRETONS.—THEIR SUPERSTITION.—PICTURESQUE NATURE OF BRITTANY.—THE START.—JERSEY.—GRANVILLE.—INQUISITORIAL CUSTOM-HOUSE OFFICERS.—FRENCH REFUGEES.—VICTOR HUGO.—HÔTEL DU NORD.

IT was with great pleasure, arising from the prospect of being soon emancipated from a long confinement in our mighty metropolis, that, at the latter end of July in the past year, I opened a certain *sanctum* and drew forth my travelling-bag, sketching-stool, rod, and other articles which have accompanied me during many wanderings through foreign lands. The sight of these old friends was peculiarly gratifying; for they

recalled pleasant memories of mighty mountains, snow-robed ; lovely valleys watered by babbling streams ; and plains, rich with the harvests of the sunny south, which I have crossed, followed, and explored during a series of holiday tours.

Time, that relentless persecutor, which robs us of so many enjoyments, does not, in my case at least, diminish the delight which always accompanies these annual vacations ; and I think—nay more, I am certain—that when I had completed my little preparations and buckled the last strap, I felt as if the weight of years had been lifted from my shoulders, and as able to scale Alps and ford rivers as I was during those days—alas, how long ago !—when, with a dear friend, I made the grand tour of Europe.

But on the present occasion I had a particular reason to be joyful, for I was about to exchange the crowd, the hum, the shock of men, for a ramble through BRITTANY, where nature wears her loveliest robes, and where so-called modern civilization and refinement have not changed the primitive and unsophisticated life of the inhabitants of that corner of France.

To make myself acquainted with Brittany had long been one of my favourite day-dreams ; and now that I was on the eve of landing on its shores, my spirits ran high. For besides its natural beauties,

which are very great, the historical associations connected with that once famous province of France are particularly interesting to Englishmen, from whose island home it derives its name.

Without entering into the perplexing maze of Celtic and early Roman history, in which various writers on Brittany have confessed themselves bewildered, it may be confidently stated, on sound historical and philological evidence, that Sulpitius Severus gave the country in question the name of Britannia, in consequence of the settlement of Britons, who about the beginning of the fourth century left their native island, to escape, as some historians state, the persecution of Saxon tribes who harassed their coasts. Previous to this event, Brittany was known among nations by the Celtic name of Armorica, the words *Ar-Mor* signifying, in that language, ‘on the sea.’* This appellation is very appropriate, for, besides being nearly surrounded by the sea, the country is indented by long and sinuous creeks, which greatly add to its singular and picturesque appearance, and afford the tourist a continual change of scenery.

The inhabitants of this remote and unfrequented part of France are as remarkable as its physical fea-

* It is worthy of notice that the Slavonic words “Po Mor” have the same meaning, from whence Pomerania on the Baltic has received its name.

tures. Descendants of a people who lived and died in the trammels of the darkest Pagan and Druidical superstitions, the present Bretons—and especially those inhabiting Basse Bretagne, or, as Froissart calls it, the “*Vrai Bretagne Bretonante*”—are renowned, though they are Christians, for their deep-rooted belief in wild legends and strange traditions, which are singularly mixed up with the old idolatrous worship of stones and fountains. Indeed it is stated on good authority that the inhabitants of Ouessant were idolaters as lately as a century and a half ago; and the dwellers on the savage isles, which are eternally fretted by the restless Atlantic along the coast of Finistere, are still steeped in a strange mental confusion of Paganism and Romanism.

The tenacity with which the Breton clings to the habits and belief of his forefathers is apparent by his retention of the Celtic language, almost universally spoken in Basse Bretagne, and by his quaint costume, which, in many districts, is that of the sixteenth century. True, where the advancing wave of civilization and refinement, heralding the railway which will ere long bisect Brittany, has passed, the strange dress of our forefathers, with its trunk-hose and flowing hair, has given place to more modern costume; but apart from high roads the Breton may still be seen in his *bragous-bras* and goat-skin coat,

living in happy ignorance of the arts of civilization, which will, in the fullness of time, transform his graceful and comfortable broad-brimmed hat into a covering of a chimney-pot form, and teach him that forks were invented as well as knives.* These peculiarities, and the wonderfully quaint buildings and glorious churches which overspread Brittany in rich profusion, make that country a most desirable field for a summer tour; and now that I enjoy the satisfaction of adding it to my pleasant memories of foreign lands, I wonder greatly it has been so little visited by tourists. There is an idea generally entertained that the wayfarer in Brittany will have to rough it in the severest sense,—that the inns are of the vilest description, and the food scarcely eatable. In very remote localities, where the traveller will only find a solitary *auberge*, with signs inscribed, in wonderfully formed letters, “*BUTIN MAD*,”—or, as these Celtic words signify, “Tobacco sold,”—and underneath more strange words, stating that “Foot-travellers are lodged.” The fare will certainly be somewhat coarse, the bread being made of rye, and the cider cruelly hard and sour. But at the more frequented inns the provisions are generally excellent,—delicious fish, fresh from the sea,

* I met a French gentleman in Brittany who assured me that he saw an ancient Breton, eighty-five years old, who declared that he had never used a fork, preferring his fingers, when sitting at meals.

frequently delighting the eyes and palate of the hungry tourist, while everywhere beds, clothed with linen of spotless purity, invite him to repose. It is indeed remarkable how amidst dirt, which often coats the floors of French inns with a thick crust, such great pains should be taken to preserve the bed, like an island of pure white, in the midst of so much filth; but such is the fact. I have now travelled through nearly every Department in France, and I do not remember ever meeting with a dirty bed: this, I fear, cannot be said of our happily in all other respects cleaner island. On the score of accommodation and food the wanderer in Brittany has nothing to apprehend, unless indeed he cannot exist without the comforts and luxuries of such establishments as Dessoin's Hotel at Calais, or the 'Lord Warden' at Dover.

In accordance with my custom, when planning a Continental tour, I laid down a line of march on a comprehensive map, which I followed, and which subsequent experience gave me no reason to regret having chosen.

Desirous of spending as much time as possible in Brittany, I resolved on proceeding to it by the most direct route, and accordingly embarked on the night of the 1st of August, at Southampton, for Jersey; and after enjoying for a brief season the hospitality of Colonel Le Couteur at his charming residence in that

island, I crossed in a very small steamer to Granville. Fortunately the weather was highly propitious. A gentle breeze crisped the bright blue waters, and, as the French coast became more distinct, we passed between numerous islands which fringe the shore, and are the dread, in stormy weather, of mariners frequenting those waters. The voyage now assumed a lake-like character, and the spirits of my fellow-passengers, who were for the most part French ladies and gentlemen returning from visiting the Channel Islands, rose high at the prospect of landing without paying the usual tribute to Neptune. For my own part I was disposed to be in good humour with everything and everybody, when, on entering the harbour of Granville, my temper, and that of my companions, was sorely tried by the Custom-house officers, who, before the vessel was secured to her moorings, pounced on us with an energy and determination of purpose which at first led me to suspect that I was in the company of a band of smugglers. The male passengers were thrust into a narrow cabin and subjected to a personal examination, which, in my own case, was of the most inquisitorial nature, and the ladies were, as I heard, obliged to submit to even a more searching ordeal at the hands of repulsive-looking women robed in black. Nor was this all : my Foreign Office passport, which is signed by the present Prime Minister,

was criticized and examined with a minuteness to which Austria herself, in her darkest hour of suspicion, would scarcely stoop ; the contents of my portmanteau were rudely disturbed, my letters of introduction read, and my Bible carried off and not returned until it had been minutely inspected. From the time we landed until we were emancipated from the wretched little Custom-house, four hours had elapsed, a much longer period than is required to pass the luggage of three hundred passengers through the Paris Custom-house, and we did not muster more than a sixth of that number. The whole proceedings were of so vexatious a nature, that I was led to inquire why we should have been subjected to so much apparently useless annoyance. The answer was, that in consequence of the great number of French refugees living in the Channel Islands, who, with Victor Hugo at their head, were waging fierce paper-war against the French Emperor, orders had been received from Paris to search the luggage and persons of all passengers landing at Granville "*avec rigueur*;" and I can attest that, in my case at least, the officials carried out their instructions to the fullest extent. I can well understand that great anxiety must be felt to prevent any of those powerful but abusive and scurrilous articles emanating from Victor Hugo, which dishonour his pen, and which are published in a Jersey paper called

'L'Homme,' entering France ; but at the same time I think the bearer of a Foreign Office passport, who is described as a Londoner, should not be subjected to the rough treatment I had to undergo.* It was difficult indeed to believe that England and France were friendly allies while a sturdy and uncivil *douanier* was almost stripping the clothes from my back. Had not political motives been assigned for the inquisitorial ordeal, it might have been ascribed to a desire, on the part of the French, to be revenged on Englishmen for the conduct of their ancestors who burned Granville in 1695.

As soon however as the thick-legged girls, who do the work of beasts of burden at Granville, had deposited my luggage in the Hôtel du Nord, and that I had dined, the flow of good humour, which had been rudely checked by the Custom-house authorities, again set in ; and following Sterne's example, I drank the health of his Imperial Majesty, Napoleon III., to assure myself that I bore no grudge to him ; and having thus restored the balance of temper, I set out for a stroll through Granville.

* M. Hugo and his scurrilous *troupe* have since paid the penalty of their abuse of British hospitality. They ought to consider themselves highly fortunate that their punishment consisted simply in banishment from Jersey.



Avranches.

CHAPTER II.

A RAMBLE THROUGH GRANVILLE.—THE FORTRESS.—DRIVE TO AVRANCHES.—M. LE SOUS-PRÉFET.—BEAUTIFUL SITUATION OF AVRANCHES.—PORTAL OF ST. GEORGE'S CHAPEL.—ANCIENT TOWER.—THE WIDOW'S HOSPITALITY.—PAIN DE PRÊTRE.—THE LAST STONE OF THE CATHEDRAL.—HENRY II.—HIS ABSOLUTION.—STRIKING CEREMONY.—MUSEUM.—LIBRARY.—ABELARD'S TREATISE.—TIPHaine's CALENDAR.—DISTRIBUTION OF PRIZES.—THE COLLEGE INSPECTOR.—WARLIKE ADDRESS.—VOLHUBERT.—THE HIRSUTE PRIZEMAN.

FAMILIAR as the tourist may be with the Continent, there is always a charm in the first town in which he lands: the great fact that the sea-passage is over has probably something to do in gilding the threshold of a foreign tour. Be this as it may, it is certain that

a French or Belgian seaport wears a very different aspect when seen at the beginning or close of a two months' vacation.

Thus Granville, which in truth has little to recommend it to the attention of the traveller beyond its fortress and position, was scanned and explored by me with an ardour befitting the commencement of my travels. The citadel is certainly picturesque, and there is an eminently "Proutish" bit immediately within the gates, which, if sketched aright, will form an agreeable *souvenir* in the tourist's portfolio.

The fortress of Granville is closely associated with the melancholy fortunes of the Vendean army which, headed by the young and gallant Larochejaquelin, besieged it unsuccessfully for thirty-six hours. The difficulties the Royalists had to contend with were of the most terrible nature. The localities are still shown where desperate, and in some cases successful, attempts were made to scale the lofty walls by means of bayonets thrust into the crevices ; but, unprovided with artillery, the Royalists were foiled, and being still further disappointed by not receiving assistance from England, they were obliged to abandon their undertaking, and retreated with great loss.

Having explored the fortress, and threaded with great caution the filthy streets in the lower town, which did not reward my enterprise by yielding a

single quaint house, I availed myself of a diligence, which started at four o'clock in the afternoon, for Avranches, and was fortunate in sharing the *coupé* with the Sous-Préfet of the Côtes du Nord, who lives at Avranches. This companionship was productive of much enjoyment. During the drive, which led us through an extremely beautiful country, M. Le Sous-Préfet was profuse in his information, and was so kind as to invite me to the hospitalities of the Sous-Préfecture. He was particularly solicitous that I should make due allowance for the rigorous Custom-house examination at Granville, the necessity for which he greatly deplored ; for, said he, our trips to your islands, which were always most enjoyable, are now rendered highly vexatious and painful.

The sun was sinking in an aerial sea of golden glory as we wound up the long and steep ascent leading to the plateau on which Avranches is built. Scenes of great beauty were disclosed at each turn of the road. Presently a broad belt of bright light fringed the vast expanse of wooded landscape ; and a speck, scarcely bigger than a large ship under sail, and considerably resembling it, appeared in the centre of the brightness,—it was Mont St. Michel. On expressing my intention of visiting that celebrated place, my companion told me that he would give me an order to the Governor of the castle, desiring that I should be shown all that

was curious and interesting, and he redeemed his promise; for the following morning an official envelope was placed in my hands containing the order, and an invitation to be present at the distribution of prizes at the College, which was to take place during the day, in the quadrangle of the building: the note further invited me to join the *cortége* which was to leave the Préfecture at one o'clock.

A walk round Avranches during the forenoon soon led me to admire the good taste of the English who have made it their home. Besides possessing all the necessary requirements for a residence, such as excellent houses and shops, it is remarkable for its great cleanliness,—a luxury highly to be appreciated in France,—and the beauty of its situation is almost unrivalled. There is a view from the Jardin des Plantes which the visitor should not fail to add to his remembrances of fair scenes. It is best seen through the portal of an ancient chapel dedicated to St. George, which was erected at Bouilletau in the eleventh century. The building having been sadly mutilated during the great Revolution, the Avranches Society of Antiquaries resolved on preserving the exquisite portal, which they removed to their beautiful Jardin des Plantes. The view from this locality and that from the Préfecture are certainly among the finest in France, presenting a rare combination of land- and seascapes.

The lover of old places will find several charming bits among the ancient walls which partly girdle the town. One tower, of the many which protected the place, alone remains. It is worth visiting for the sake of seeing the enormous thickness of the walls, and the depth of the dungeons. These are used to store cider, which is retailed by an ancient couple who live in the tower. While I was examining the building, a woman, bent with woe and years, entered and begged to have a pitcher which she carried filled with cider, for which she promised to pay on the following day, not having then the means. The credit demanded was not excessive—only two sous—but it was refused by the cider-merchant. It was a maxim of that good man, the Rev. Sydney Smith, to endeavour to make one person at least happy each day; this done, and, according the scriptural span of life to a benevolent donor, he shows how many thousands of human beings may be made happy by one man. The opportunity of marking my day with a white stone was not rejected; I bade the cider-seller fill the widow's pitcher, at the same time placing half a franc in her hand. The gratitude of the poor woman was excessive, and manifested itself by more than empty words; for in the course of the day, when sketching in another part of the town, she accosted me, and urgently entreated me to enter her house, which was near at

hand, where, said she, I will give you a slice of good *pain de prêtre** and a cup of cider. This little incident lives even more agreeably in my memory than the picturesque tower with which it is associated.

Among the many places laid waste by the revolutionary whirlwind, there is none which more signally attests its fury than a bare tract of ground surrounded by trees on the verge of the noble terrace near the Préfecture, where stood one of the finest cathedrals in Normandy. Of the mighty fabric which filled the entire space now unoccupied, actually nothing remains but a solitary stone in one corner, surmounted by a column bearing the following inscription :—

SUR CETTE PIERRE
ICI A LA PORTE DE LA
CATHÉDRALE D'AVRANCHES
APRÈS LE MEURTRE DE
THOMAS BECKET,
ARCHEVÈQUE DE CANTORBÉRY,
HENRI II.,
ROI D'ANGLETERRE
ET DUC DE NORMANDIE,
REÇUT A GENOUX
DES LEGATS DU PAPE
L'ABSOLUTION APOSTOLIQUE,
LE DIMANCHE, XXII MAI, 1172.

* I may mention that in the north of France three qualities of bread are baked,—*pain blanc*, which was selling in August last at

Here indeed is a spot particularly interesting to an Englishman. Illumined by the lights of undoubted history, the mind may easily fill the void which now exists in the scene. Fancy rears a majestic cathedral, surmounted by spires lost in the clouds ; the vast interior is lighted by innumerable windows blazing with rich hues. The air is heavy with incense ; mitred bishops, wearing gorgeous robes, and headed by the Papal legates, sweep down the broad nave, and issue from the Cathedral by the great west-door. And what a spectacle awaits them ! There, humbly kneeling on the rugged and bare stone step, is Henry II., King of England and Duke of Normandy, eldest son of the mighty Plantagenet, who, with the meek submission of a craven criminal, bends before the terrors of a threatening church. It was a stupendous triumph ; for the monarch not only acknowledged the supremacy of Pope Alexander III., but expressed his entire willingness to do anything which the Pontiff might desire. “ See, my Lords Legates, my person is in your hands ; be assured that whatever you order me to perform, that will I do ; moreover I will bear the sign of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ for three years, and will proceed to the Holy Land,

forty-four centimes the kilogramme ; *pain de prêtre*, thirty-nine centimes ; and *pain de froment*, thirty-seven centimes. The kilogramme is equal to 2.206 English pounds.

unless I shall receive permission from His Holiness the Pope to remain at home."

Baronius, to whose annals we are indebted for these particulars, adds, that the submissive monarch was ordered to equip and maintain two hundred soldiers for service in the Holy Land against the Pagans, to restore all the property which had been confiscated to Canterbury, and, if ordered by the Pope, to proceed to Spain for the purpose of reseuing that country from the Pagans. Having pledged his word on the Gospels to fulfil these commands, he was absolved from the sin of desiring the murder of Becket, of which he declared himself to be wholly innocent: then, in the presence of his attendant nobles, who were purposely made witnesses of the King's penitence and humiliation, the monarch was allowed to enter the Cathedral, as a token of his re-admission into the Church.

Among many objects of interest in the Museum of Avranches, is a model of the Cathedral before which this strange and interesting ceremony was enacted. It must have been a magnificent pile, and its destruction could only have been effected by very great labour.

The Museum possesses a numerous collection of busts, including one of Huet, the celebrated Bishop of Avranches, after whom the place where the Cathedral stood is named. I had the pleasure of reseuing

a fine memorial of our great northern novelist from oblivion and a dark corner, to which it had been consigned in consequence of the inability of the Museum *custode* to give it a name. An English gentleman had sent the bust from London as a present to the Museum, but having omitted to state whom it was intended to represent, it had been put aside. The visitor will now see the honoured features and name of Scott among those of other literary worthies.

The pleasure of a residence at Avranches, to the literary man, is greatly increased by the excellent and large public library, which at the time of my visit was being arranged in a noble hall in the Hôtel de Ville. Besides some twelve thousand printed books, the library contains many curious manuscripts, formerly belonging to the Cathedral and Monastery of St. Michel. Among them are a superbly illustrated Bible of the twelfth century; the Cartulary of the Monastery; a copy of Abelard's treatise, 'Sic et Non,' which had the honour of being included in the Index of Prohibited Works by the Inquisition; and an exceedingly curious Almanac, supposed to have been compiled by Tiphaine, wife of the famous knight Duguesclin, who, on account of her astrological lore, acquired the name of "Tiphaine la Fée." The Calendar, which is on vellum, contains numerous astrological warnings of unlucky days, set forth in monkish rhymes, of which

the following are specimens :—in April, the tenth and eleventh days are particularly fatal, as

“Denus et undenus est mortis vulnere plenus,”

and in July,

“Tredecimus mactat Julii, decimus labefactat.”

After spending a couple of hours in the library, I proceeded to the Sous-Préfecture, where I found the Sous-Préfet and numerous civil and military officials *en grande tenue*. Among them was the Government Inspector of Colleges, to whom I was introduced : he had come expressly from Paris to be present at the distribution of the college prizes. My humble travelling-dress seemed rather out of place among so many glittering uniforms ; but the Sous-Préfet soon put me at my ease. After waiting a few minutes for accessions to our number we set out for the College, preceded by a military band. One side of the spacious quadrangle was occupied by a platform, upon which were placed chairs and a large table covered by many hundreds of handsomely bound books, and pyramids of bay-leaf crowns. In front of the platform were seats for the students, and on either side an appropriate place for persons invited to the ceremony. The background was filled by spectators from the town and country. Gay flags and flowers were liberally placed about the building, and greatly heightened the pleasing effect of the scene.

The proceedings commenced by the Rector of the College giving an account of the collegiate studies during the past year, and of the progress made by the students; after which, the Government Inspector addressed the young gentlemen. In the course of his address he took occasion to draw attention to the glorious deeds of the French army in the Crimea, and hoped that among the youths before him, many of whom he doubted not would follow the noble profession of arms, all entering the army would strive to imitate the conduct of their eminent citizen General Volhubert,* and be found anxious and eager to sustain the high renown of the French eagles in the battle-field,—those glorious eagles which had been carried triumphantly throughout Europe by the first Napoleon, and would, he was confident, be equally victorious under the third monarch of that name. This part of his address, which was extremely eloquent and delivered with great oratorical power, was rapturously applauded by the students, some of whom doubtless longed to be candidates for military glory,—

“E'en at the cannon's mouth.”

* Volhubert, who was born at Avranches, was one of Napoleon's favourite Generals. He was killed at the battle of Austerlitz. His last words were, “Go to the Emperor; tell him that in one hour I shall be dead; I wished to have done more.” A handsome marble statue, representing him in his General's uniform, has recently been erected in Avranches.

At the conclusion of the address the distribution of prizes commenced. One of the college professors announced the names of the prizemen, and the Sous-Préfet called up the individuals appointed to distribute the rewards. The Bishop of the diocese presented the first prize: after handing the books to the fortunate youth he placed a crown on his brows and kissed his lips and both his checks. The same ceremony accompanied the presentation of the first five prizes, the pause between each presentation being filled by a flourish of trumpets. When the sixth student, whose formidable mustachios and beard proclaimed him to be on the threshold of man's estate, was summoned on the platform, I was not a little surprised by hearing my name called, and even still more so, looking round, to find the Sous-Préfet requesting me to come forward and present the prize to the aforesaid hirsute youth. Though greatly disliking appearing thus publicly, I saw that there was no possibility of escape; so with the best grace at command I advanced to the front of the platform, placed the prize-books in the young man's hands, the crown on his brows, and substituted a hearty shake of the hand for the treble kiss, which I could not make up my mind to give. Had the student been a beardless boy, my feelings might not have been so opposed to the French salute; but under the circumstances I could not overcome

my repugnance to bring my lips in contact with a mass of black hair, for the student's mustachios were of a most extensive nature. However I may have offended against etiquette, the spectators were more than usually loud in their applause, which was continued long after the student had regained his place.

I did not remain during the whole ceremony, which occupied five hours ; but I saw sufficient to feel assured that the College of Avranches, with its eighteen professors and four hundred students, does not enjoy its eminent reputation undeservedly. The education is of a very high order, and great pains are taken to fit the students for whatever profession they may choose to adopt.





Mont St. Michel.

CHAPTER III.

EXCURSION TO MONT ST. MICHEL.—ROUTES TO THE MONT.—THE SANDS.—APPEARANCE OF THE ROCK.—ITS HISTORY.—DRUIDICAL PRIESTESSES.—THEIR AMOURS.—MONS JOVIS.—THE ARCHANGEL MICHAEL.—ST. AUBERT'S VISION.—THE BUILDING OF THE CHURCH.—MIRACLES.—HOLY RELICS.—THE FORTRESS.—SIEGES.—REPULSE OF THE ENGLISH.—THE KNIGHTS OF ST. MICHAEL.—PILGRIMS.—THE FALL.—CONFLAGRATIONS.—SEA STORMS.—FORMER CONDITION OF THE MONT.—PRESENT STATE.—THE TRIPLE GATES.—LA MERVEILLE.—THE VAULTS.—THE CHURCH.—EXQUISITE CLOISTERS.—IRON CAGE.—OUBLIETTES.—PROMENADE DES FOUS.—PRISONERS.—THE TOWN CHURCH.—FISHERMEN.—THE SANDS.—THEIR DEPTH.—FOGS.—RETURN TO AVRANCHES.

THERE are two routes from the mainland to Mont St. Michel, one from Avranches, the other from Pontorson. The first involves a drive of thirteen miles, for the most part over wretched roads, whereas Pont-

orson is only five miles from the rock, and is clearly the more desirable starting-place. When I became aware, by innumerable dislocatory thumps, of the dreadful nature of the road between Avranches and the sands, I was vexed that I had not proceeded from Pontorson, by which I should have saved myself some hours of unnecessary journeying as well as bruises.

Thanks to the recent erection of a bridge, the passage of a rapid watercourse, which used to be a very formidable undertaking, is now rendered easy. It is necessary to make a great *détour* before the sands can be approached, and most tantalizing to see the huge rock at the end of an hour's drive appear nearly as far off as it does at Avranches.

I started in a light cabriolet, at eight in the morning, and reached the Mont in about four hours. The land bordering on the vast sands was covered with rich crops of golden-hued corn, which seemed like gems set in rings of emerald; for the cornfields were mostly of very small dimensions and the hedgerows thick and luxuriant. The excessive richness of the crops is due to the fertilizing nature of the sand, or *tangue*, as it is called, which is carried from the Grève by a hundred thousand loads annually to distant parts of the interior, each load costing, with the carriage, about six francs. Besides being used as

a manure, the sand yields excellent edible salt, which is extracted by an evaporating process.

The view of the Mont on entering the apparently boundless sand-plain is extremely striking. The dark ship-like speck seen from Avranches has expanded to a conical-shaped granite rock, 580 feet high and 3195 feet in circumference at the base, bristling with quaint buildings surmounted by a wilderness of pinnacles.

While we are journeying across the sands, let us cast a retrospective glance at the history of this singular place, which is clouded by wild legends.

Before Christianity dispersed the darkness of idolatry, tradition records that Mont St. Michel was called Belenus,* by which name the Druids worshipped the sun. The rock was the favourite abode of Druidical priestesses, who wore crowns of vervain, and carried golden quivers filled with magic arrows, which, when discharged by youths who had never known the passion of love, were reputed to have the power of allaying storms. Mariners, and those about engaging on maritime expeditions, were particularly desirous to be furnished with these arrows, and when the expedition proved successful, the youth who had accompa-

* A rock in the vicinity of Mont St. Michel, of similar formation, but much smaller, retains the name of Tombeleine, from "Tumba Beli."

nied the ship was sent to the priestesses with presents : if these were acceptable, he was welcomed and rewarded by the love of the fairest priestess, who marked her approbation and passion by attaching to his garments as many golden shells as she had given him proofs of her love. So runs the legend ; and it is remarkable that the pilgrims of later days, after visiting the shrine of St. Michel, attached to their cloaks shells, which were always sold by women.*

When Druidism became extinct, Mont St. Michel was called Mont Jan or Mons Jovis ; and the Romans raised an altar upon it to Jupiter, who was worshipped there until the middle of the third century, when Christianity was introduced among the Gauls, and Constantine issued his famous edict in favour of Christians. Three centuries later, the archangel Michael, who had obtained dominion over all high places, appeared thrice before St. Aubert, Bishop of Avranches, and ordered him to build a church to the living God on the summit of the rock. The good Bishop, unwilling to obey the command, was made sensibly aware of the holy power of the angel by the latter placing his finger on the Prelate's for-

* Strabo tells us that **Druïdesses** were in the habit of forming love-connections. He speaks of an island at the mouth of the Loire which was particularly famous for the amorous practices of those ladies.

head, which, says the legend in the cartulary of the monastery, left a hole in the Bishop's skull;* a miracle, adds the legend quaintly but not very logically, not a whit more difficult of belief than those recorded in Holy Writ.

The Bishop now set to work in earnest, and was the more satisfied that he had received heavenly commands to build a church, as, when he was planning its form, he found the foundation lines traced by a heavy dew, which only moistened certain portions of the rock. Numerous miracles followed : water flowed in copious springs ; holy reliques supernaturally appeared ; and the church, to which the name of " Saint-Michel au Péril de la Mer" was given, became renowned throughout Christian lands. Monarchs and Princes endowed it and the adjoining monastery with great wealth ; so that, according to St. Benoît,

" De Saint-Michel, l'Angle des cieux,
Sos ciel n'en eut nul leu si bel."

Military defences were now constructed ; for the monastery, with its vast riches, was an object of cupidity to the rulers of various nations ; and so powerful did it become, that we find the monks contributing

* Priestcraft, with its usual vigilance in Roman Catholic countries, is careful that the canonized St. Aubert's skull should still be shown, with of course the identical hole : the curious may see it at Avranches.

six large armed ships to the famous expedition of William the Conqueror.

In vain was it often besieged ; the flag bearing the arms of the monastery—ten scallop-shells, three fleurs-de-lys, a cross, and a mitre—was never taken ; and although the English, when masters of Normandy, made desperate attempts, in 1418 and 1423, to carry the rock, they were always defeated. Two huge cannon, from the mouths of which enormous granite balls protrude, may be seen at the entrance to the fort ; they were taken from the English when they were repulsed at these sieges, and the names of a hundred and nineteen French knights are still preserved, who performed deeds of glory on these occasions. The reputation of piety and heroism which the religious Knights of St. Michael enjoyed, caused them to be renowned throughout Europe. Pilgrims from all countries hastened to prostrate themselves before the altar of the mighty archangel. Kings and Princes were to be seen mingling in the crowd with the pauper, the beggar, and the cripple. Edward the Confessor, on the occasion of his visit, made rich offerings to the church. The possessions of the monks extended to England, St. Michael's Mount, in Cornwall, being among their dependencies. The Dukes of Normandy coined money, to which they gave the name of “Angelots ;” and Louis XI., who visited the monastery on two

occasions as a devotee, gave a most signal proof of his veneration and respect for this great rock-temple, by instituting an Order of St. Michel, which was at first limited to thirty-six knights. These wore collars of gold incrusted with silver shells, and a medal representing the archangel Michael transfixing a dragon at his feet, with the legend,

“*Immensi tremor Oeeani.*”

The preamble to the statutes of this Order runs thus:—“*Nous Louis, à la gloire de Dieu, notre Créateur tout-puissant, et révérence de glorieuse Vierge Marie, et en l'honneur de Monseigneur Saint-Michel Archange, premier chevalier qui précipita du ciel l'ennemi de Dieu et de l'humain lignage, et qui, en son lieu et oratoire appelé Mont Saint-Michel, a toujours particulièrement gardé, préservé, et défendu, sans être pris, subjugué, ni mis ès mains des ennemis de notre royaume : et afin que tous bons et nobles courages soient excitez, et plus particulièrement émus à toutes vertueuses œuvres, le premier jour d'Août, de l'an 1469, avons créé, institué et ordonné, et par ces présentes créons, constituons et ordonnons un ordre de fraternité ou amiable compagnie de certain nombre de chevaliers, jusqu'à trente-six, lequel nous voulons être nommé de l'Ordre de Saint-Michel.*”*

But alas for all human greatness ! the pride and

* ‘*Histoire des Ordres Religieux.*’

pomp of the warrior-monks shared the fate of all things mundane. Chroniclers aver that

“Comets, importing change of time and state,”

gave ominous signs of the downfall of Mont St. Michel. Be this as it may, the glory of the great Rock-Temple set; and now those noble halls, which often echoed to the footfall of Kings and Princes, are filled with prisoners and weaving-looms; and the once gorgeous church, in which the image of the archangel Michael may still be seen, is used as a dining-room for criminals!

The force of the trite proverb, “Mare, ignis, mulier sunt tria mala,” is exemplified at Mont St. Michel, for probably few places have suffered more from water and fire than this curious locality; and, if tradition is at all to be credited, it has not escaped unscathed from the power of woman exerted for evil purposes. With regard to the first, we are told in monkish chronicles that the rock was not always sea-washed, but that it was once surrounded by a dense forest.

These documents state that the priests who had been sent to Mont Gargan (Garganus Mons of Pliny) in the south of Italy, for the relics of St. Michael, and who had been two years absent on their mission, were astonished on returning to Normandy at finding that the proud rock, which they had left embosomed by a forest, was now encompassed by water. That

some great change of this nature took place is so far borne out by geological evidence, for portions of trees, with their roots, are found below the surface of the Grève ; and it is certain that about the beginning of the twelfth century many villages and houses on the coast of Normandy were submerged. In 1735 a terrible tempest swept away the greater part of the parish of Paluel ; and as lately as 1817 another furious equinoctial gale elevated the waters fifteen feet above their usual level, and carried ruin and destruction over a vast area between Avranches and Pontorson, destroying at the same time a great portion of the defences of Mont St. Michel.

The effects of this storm were felt with equal severity on the coast of Cornwall,—a natural result when we remember that the waters of the English Channel were acted upon by the pressure of the mighty Atlantic.

More remarkable is the fact that our St. Michael's Mount, whose history is not unlike that of its grander namesake on the French coast, was formerly called the “Hoar Rock in the Wood,” on account of its having been surrounded by a forest ; this is corroborated by the circumstance that ligneous substances, more varied and abundant than those found in the sands round Mont St. Michel, are discovered by digging a few feet below the surface of the sand in Mount's Bay.

Bearing in mind that Mont St. Michel was the chosen abode of knights and priests, who gloried in asceticism, we may wonder how woman's influence can have injured the mighty fortress. But, if chronicles are veracious, the servants of the archangel, forgetful of their vows, proclaimed not unfrequently by their lives that Anacreon was right when he sang,—

“Woman, be fair, we must adore thee ;
Smile, and a world is weak before thee.”

At all events, the loose conduct of the monks frequently brought the ecclesiastical establishment at Mont St. Michel into great disrepute and considerable danger.

But it has been by fire especially that the buildings suffered. For while fierce cannonades failed to subdue the fortress, and terrible sea-storms had no other effect than that of breaching the lower defences and overthrowing portions of the circling walls, repeated conflagrations, generally occasioned by lightning, spread ruin throughout the beautiful structure.

The zeal of thousands of pilgrims however repaired all these ravages, and the monastery was still the wonder and admiration of Europe ; until at last came the great Revolution, more terrible even than sea or lightning, which spared neither church nor palace, and before the fierce blast of which the trembling monks were scattered like leaves in an autumn gale. Three

hundred priests, it is recorded, were cast into fearful dungeons, which never saw the light of day ; the church was stripped of its glories, statues and sculptures were demolished, and the tide of pilgrims ceased to flow across the sands.

But with all these adversities, aided as they have been and are by time's gnawing tooth, the wonders and glories of Mont St. Michel are not all departed : we are at the gates, let us see what remains.

A barefooted fellow had accompanied me across the sands to point out the track,—an unnecessary service, as it was the period of neap-tides and the waters were out. When under the feudal walls and towers, which still circle the base of the rock, I paused to survey the extraordinary pile of buildings, rising fantastically around the church, which dominates the cone. Bright-hued lichens streak the rock where it is exposed ; and near the base small gardens, brilliant with gaudy flowers, peep between quaint houses, which seem as if they would tumble headlong down the precipitous rock.

Passing three gates, one of which retains its ancient portcullis, the street leading to the little town is reached. At its entrance are a couple of taverns where rude refreshments may be obtained, made however frequently more palatable by fresh fish which are caught round the Mont. Near these taverns are

several stalls for the sale of carvings fashioned by the prisoners confined in the fortress, and small metallic shells and crosses, which are still offered for sale to the visitor by women.

Two ways lead to the Castle Convent, one through the narrow town by means of a steep street or stairs barely wide enough for the passage of two persons; the other by the ramparts, which hangs and clings to the rock in so wonderful a manner as to have caused it to be named “La Merveille.”

The latter route is preferable; for besides the comparative greater facility of ascent which it affords, the views are far finer than those seen from the narrow street. Indeed it would be impossible to conceive a stranger, and at the same time more picturesque, spectacle than that of the clustering buildings towering to a vast height, beautiful in their decay, fostering in their fissures wild flowers and mosses of lovely hues, which mantle the massive stones and fringe the crumbling wall-tops.

While ascending I observed numerous vaulted passages leading to various parts of the rock, which were used in the days when the Mont was frequently besieged. The mouths of these passages are overgrown by weeds and briars, and in places by luxuriant fig-trees.

On gaining the massive gates forming the entrance

to the Castle Convent, between formidable twin towers, I delivered my visiting order, addressed to the Governor, which, in addition to the usual printed form, requested that I might be shown “*tout ce que le Mont Saint-Michel renferme de curieux et d'intéressant : recommandation toute particulière.*”

I strongly advise the tourist to procure, if possible, an order of this nature, as the ordinary permission gives access to only a few rooms and halls.

After waiting a short time, a sergeant announced that my pass had been countersigned by the Governor, and that he would conduct me through the buildings. To describe these would be trenching too much on the province of the guide-book, and be wearisome to the reader. During two hours I was led through long and tortuous vaulted passages, halls, closets, and dungeons, until I became fairly bewildered. In consequence of the removal of the state prisoners to Cayenne, the large “*Salle des Chevaliers,*” in which they were formerly confined, is now shown. This, the church, and the cloisters, are the most remarkable portions of the convent. The effect however which their vastness and beauty are calculated to impress on the mind is considerably marred by the present use to which they are put. For where of yore mailed knights and sandalled monks assembled, pale-faced prisoners, seated before looms or making mats, are now

seen, contrasting strangely with the handsome pillars and exquisite sculptures around them.

The church, a noble building, a hundred and seventy feet long, bears the marks of the last great fire in 1834, and is sustained by ponderous timbers; but the cloisters, which are allotted to the prisoners for exercise, have fortunately escaped injury.

The whole strength and talent of the artist seem to have been put forth in adorning this part of the Convent, which, although dating as far back as the commencement of the thirteenth century, is almost perfect. Traces of colour may still be seen, which was liberally used on the capitals of the pillars. The latter are double, and in no case are the ornaments repeated. Fertility of invention, as well as great excellence of execution, characterized the early workers in stone, who have left examples behind them which we should do well to imitate. It is worth while visiting the underground passages, to see the curious and clever architectural, or rather engineering, contrivances by which the superstructures are supported. Enormous tanks for holding rain-water are among the subterranean wonders, and I was shown the dungeon where the celebrated so-called iron cage was kept. This terrible prison within prison, which however was constructed of solid wood, was tenanted by numerous persons of note until Charles X., who, when he was

Count d'Artois, visited Mont St. Michel in 1777, ordered it to be destroyed. Though it ceased to be used as a place of confinement, this order was not carried into effect; but when the young Princes of Orléans, who shortly afterwards visited the prisons, saw the cage still in existence, they caused it to be broken before their eyes.

Beneath the dungeon where the cage was kept, hollowed out of the rock, are the frightful *oubliettes*, ironically called "*in pace*," from whence the unfortunate wretch who was committed to their depths never returned. Near these an inclined plane is carried from the opening of one of the dungeons to the base of the rock. Gangs of prisoners turn a huge wheel by walking within it, by which means everything necessary for the use of the establishment is hoisted up the plane.

It was exceedingly pleasant, after a long incarceration in the gloomy dungeons and passages, to ascend to the summit of the church-spire, from whence a glorious view is obtained. The atmosphere highly favoured me, and my eye ranged over a vast extent of sand, sea, and coast.

Near the summit of the spire are two ledges: the lowest is called *la Promenade des Petits Fous*; the highest that of *les Grands Fous*; persons being found rash enough to walk round these unprotected slips of

stone at imminent risk of losing their footing and being killed.

Formerly a gigantic statue of St. Michael surmounted the spire ; it was made of bronze richly gilt, and is said to have had a brilliant effect when the sun shone on it. Now its place is supplied by a telegraph, —a significant hint that the thirteenth century is past and that we are in the nineteenth.

The buttresses and external architecture of the church are extremely curious. The sculptures bear the closest examination. Delicately wrought shells, alternating with grotesque figures, adorn the mouldings, and the gargoyle, which are of great size, are even more than usually quaint.

My tour of inspection concluded by my guide conducting me into a small room at the entrance to the prison, where I was requested to put a donation into the prisoners' box. I cast in my mite with great pleasure, lamenting however that the prisoners should be so numerous as they are, and that the French Government should have turned Mont St. Michel into a vast prison-house. The days of chivalry are past for ever, and to restore the wonderful Convent Castle to its former uses would be impossible ; but the question arises, whether the proud and wonderful structure might not be put to a more dignified use than that of incarcerating criminals, par-

ticularly as it has been found necessary to alter and mutilate many of the curious and beautiful architectural features to adapt the place to the purposes of a prison?

I descended the rock by the stone stairs which intersect the town. A short distance below the fortress, while pausing in the shade beneath a large fig-tree and musing over the strange history of the place, the tones of a piano, touched by a skilful and practised hand, fell on my ear. The sounds proceeded from a house near the fortress, and the musician was the Governor's daughter, who, being nearly as great a prisoner as the criminals under her father's care, passed, as I was told, a great portion of her time playing the piano.

The habitations composing the little town are extremely curious. The rooms of the old houses are filled with strange furniture of antique date, and the narrow habitations are fashioned to the shape of the recesses in the rocks within which they are built.

Groups of women were seated before the open doors making and mending nets, which are extensively used by the fishermen. The population of the little town, exclusive of the fortress, which is tenanted for the most part by natives of the mainland, amounts to eight hundred souls.

I visited the tiny town-church, the choir of which, for want of room, is built, bridge-fashion, across the

narrow street. Here honour is again rendered to St. Michael by a gaudily painted, life-size statue of the mighty archangel placed over the altar, representing the Saint in the act of destroying Satan. There are some very curious old carvings in the interior and a handsome missal, which have escaped the spoiling propensity of the Revolutionists.

Adjoining the church you will find a small cemetery,—a mere thread of earth skirting the rock, where the forefathers of the inhabitants of St. Michel rest from their labours. A tombstone of more than ordinary pretensions led me to read the inscription : it recorded that beneath reposed the body of David Benoît, who, rest his soul ! left a sum of money to pay for the tolling of the Convent bells when fogs obscure the Mont.

Having now exhausted the sights of this great natural and artificial curiosity, I went some distance on the sands to sketch the curious scene,—a task of considerable difficulty, from the irregularity and great number of buildings, pinnacles, and spires,—and then walked round the rock. A few years ago it was practicable to drive round the walls in a carriage ; but heavy storms during the past winter burst the great sand-barriers and made channels for the sea round the Mont, which now render walking even, difficult and dangerous ; for the slightest deviation

from the hard sand may plunge the unwary stranger into terrible quicksands of great depth—so deep that stranded ships have disappeared in the abysses.

With the view of ascertaining the depth of the quicksands, a cone of granite, to which a cord one hundred feet long was attached, was placed on the sands with the apex downwards : the stone sank immediately, and continued to descend until in twenty-four hours the entire length of cord had disappeared.*

Bearing in mind the dangerous nature of these sands, it is curious to see the fishermen going boldly forth, with their nets over their shoulders, and following the retreating tide through the tortuous channels worn by the restless waters, until they become mere specks on the boundless sand-plain.

But the stern necessities of nature, which send the North American hunter into his interminable forests in pursuit of game for the inmates of his lodge, are equally pressing upon the Mont St. Michel fisher, who finds in the sea which ebbs and flows around him a subsistence for his family. Besides several kinds of fish which are taken by hand-nets, enormous quantities of cockles, which may be called the manna of this sandy wilderness, are dug out of the sands. The spring

* The eminent Vauban planned a mode of converting the quicksands between Mont St. Michel and the land into arable ground ; at the same time keeping back the sea. But his scheme, on account of the great expense which it involved, was never carried out.

tides are the great harvest seasons of the St. Michel fisher. Then numerous large fish are stranded in the channels by the rapidly retreating waters, and are easily captured. At these periods the rock is surrounded by water during high tide.

During winter dense fogs frequently cause the Mont to appear like a huge phantom-ship, and sometimes render it invisible ; on these occasions the fishermen, who are in great danger when far from the rock, are guided home by bells which are tolled in the fortress as well as in the small village church.

I was warned by the lengthening shadow of the huge granite cone that it was time to depart. It was with regret that I left what may truly be considered one of the most remarkable places in the world ; and more than once I turned to gaze on that wonderful pile of buildings, reared by religious enthusiasm, which attracted for many generations vast crowds of worshipping pilgrims, and which will long continue to be visited by the curious traveller.

“ Still let the village girls repair
To hang with flowers the Archangel’s shrine,
And home in bright remembrance bear
Thy shells, unblamed by lyre of mine :
And I myself (let greybeards smile)
The like memorials bear away.
Farewell, farewell, time-hallow’d pile !
Adieu, thou wild, blue Norman bay ! ”



Hotel at St. Malo.

CHAPTER IV.

DRIVE TO DOL.—ENTER BRITTANY.—PRIMITIVE NATURE OF THE COUNTRY.—AGRICULTURE.—ST. MALO.—CHATEAUBRIAND'S BIRTH HOUSE.—PRICE OF FAME.—HIS TOMB.—FRENCH ENTHUSIASM.—PICTURESQUE STREETS.—VAUBAN'S FORTIFICATIONS.—JACQUES CARTIER.—WOMEN OF ST. MALO.—THE ROYAL GALLANT.—ST. SERVAN.—GALlic ENGLISH.—DRIVE TO DINAN.—BRETON BEGGARS.—GRAND VIADUCT.—LODGINGS AT DINAN.—THE EX-CAPTAIN.—PRICES PAST AND PRESENT.

THE morning after my excursion to Mont St. Michel I drove to Dol, passing through Pontorson, where the river Couénon, which flows through the town, divides Brittany from Normandy. Formerly Bretagne constituted one province, the affairs of which, before

the Revolution, were managed by a local legislature called “*États Généraux*.” Now the province is divided into five departments,—Ille et Vilaine, Côtes du Nord, Finisterre, Morbihan, and Loire Inférieure. The first is entered by the road from Avranches to St. Malo; and though the primitive character of Brittany is not stamped upon this Department, yet a drive of a few miles between Pontorson and Dol suffices to show that even here the peasants are not so comfortable and prosperous as their Norman neighbours, nor is the land so well tilled. A recent survey shows that upwards of one-fourth of the area of Ille et Vilaine consists of uncultivated land, and the produce of the ground under cultivation is far below that of Normandy. This is explained by the excessive dislike of the Breton peasant to agricultural enterprise and improvement. From generation to generation he follows the primitive husbandry of his forefathers, which he prefers to that of modern times, although the latter is rewarded by far more abundant harvests. In this respect there is great similarity of disposition between the Breton and the Irishman; but indeed the resemblance is conspicuous in many other phases of character. The lover of quaint old buildings, who sketches, will find subjects for a day’s work at Dol. The church, although a gloomy edifice, is extremely interesting in an archi-

tectural point of view, and has been fortunate in escaping nearly unscathed from the fire and fury of the Revolution. In the palmy days of Brittany, when mighty Dukes sat on her throne, Dol enjoyed the honour of being a Metropolitan See, having supplanted Tours in that dignity ; but at present the old town is included in the diocese of Rennes.

From Dol I journeyed by diligence to St. Malo, where I arrived about noon, and was fortunate in securing a good room in the excellent and picturesque Hôtel de France, the courtyard of which will be found a charming subject for the pencil. I say fortunate, as in consequence of this hotel being the house in which Châteaubriand was born, tourists and travellers are in the habit of patronizing it, and it frequently happens in summer that not a room is unoccupied. The admirers of Châteaubriand are of course anxious to sleep in the apartment where he first saw the light, but it appears that their enthusiasm is not sufficiently strong to induce them to pay fifteen francs, the sum demanded for a night's occupation of the apartment ; at least I was informed that it is very rarely tenanted ; but apart from the expense, the damp appearance of the bed and walls is sufficient to deter any one, not setting rheumatism at defiance, from sleeping in it. A small adjoining room opens upon a narrow terrace, from which a fine view is obtained of the sea

and harbour, including the headland of the grand Bay where Châteaubriand lies buried. The poet seems to have retained pleasant memories of his birth-place, as he says,—

“Combien j'ai douee souvenance
Du joli lieu de ma naissance!”

Nor did time lessen his love for St. Malo ; for in 1828, when he was sixty years old, he addressed a letter to the authorities of that town, requesting that “un petit coin de terre tout juste suffisant pour contenir mon cercueil” might be granted to him for his tomb on the extremity of the Grand Bay.

His wish was gratified ; and the Malouins not only gave him the ground which he requested, but also undertook to prepare a tomb for him. This attention drew the following letter from Châteaubriand, which he addressed to the Mayor :—

“Enfin, Monsieur, j'aurai un tombeau, et je vous le devrai ainsi qu'à mes bienveillans compatriotes. Vous savez, Monsieur, que je ne veux que quelques pieds de sable, une pierre de rivage sans ornement et sans inscription, une simple croix de fer, et une petite grille pour empêcher les animaux de me déterrer.

“La croix dira que l'homme reposant à ses pieds était un Chrétien ; cela suffira à ma mémoire.”

The tomb of this illustrious man is of the plainest description, and only differs from the structure

sketched in his letter by the cross being of granite instead of iron. It stands on the verge of the precipitous cliff bounding the Grand Bay, against which the sea continually breaks, making such music in the recesses of the rocks as a poet loves to hear. When I visited the tomb I found a party of French ladies and gentlemen around it. The ladies were kneeling reverently on the stone ledge outside the grating, saying prayers and casting *immortelles* on the tomb; while their companions were engaged in a very different manner,—Frenchmen are not celebrated for religious observances. Great pains are taken to foster the growth of flowers around the poet's grave, which have a hard struggle for life under the showers of seaspray which frequently falls on them.

Were it not for the villainous odours which poison the streets of St. Malo, the sketcher would greatly enjoy their picturesque features; I confess that during my sojourn of two days in that town, I was more than once obliged, when sketching the quaint old houses, to rush to the town walls, where the delicious sea-breeze may be inhaled uncontaminated. Strange, most strange, is it, that, with every advantage for the most efficient sanatory arrangements, St. Malo should be so foul a place as it is; but it seems in France that precisely in proportion to the local advantages enjoyed by a town is the amount of dirt. It is difficult, when

witnessing, and I may add suffering, from this state of things, to avoid contrasting the comparative cleanliness of English towns with that of Continental cities. But perhaps the inhabitants generally take the same comfort to themselves, which, according to an eminent French Bishop, reconciles Frenchmen to dirt: “Les Anglais sont plus propres aux yeux des hommes, et les Français aux yeux de Dieu.”

St. Malo,—formerly called Ile d’Aron, from a hermit who settled there, and afterwards St. Malo, from a saint of that name, who is said to have come from Winchester,—is now joined to the mainland by a long neck of land called the Sillon. The walls surrounding the town, which are nearly restored, and the adjoining fortifications, were constructed by the famous Vauban, and successfully sustained various sieges. In 1378 the English attempted to take the town, but were repulsed, and renewed attempts in 1692 and 1695 met with no better success. On the latter occasion a huge infernal machine was exploded within the walls, but produced no deadly result beyond that of killing a cat. These assaults were revenged by the Malouins devastating the English seaboard; and in later years by the daring and murderous attacks upon our commercial navy by privateers, which acquired such terrible renown as to cause St. Malo to be called “La Ville des Corsaires.” The town has long been fa-

mous for her intrepid scamen, at the head of whom stands Jacques Cartier, who discovered Newfoundland and a large portion of Canada, and whose successors still go forth in their small barks to fish on the celebrated cod-banks. A man who did so much to increase the maritime glory of his country as Cartier, highly deserves a statue from his native town ; but the Malouins seem indifferent to his fame and merits, and have expended their enthusiasm on Duguy Trouin, a statue of whom stands opposite the Hôtel de Ville. An inscription sets forth that the said Trouin was a naval hero, born at St. Malo in 1673, and adds, what will probably startle the English reader, that “ il a chassé les Anglais sur toutes les mers.”

The St. Malo women of the lower orders are not without renown, being sturdy helpmates of their sailor-husbands, and worthy descendants of those brave women who took an active part in the great League wars. Tradition records that our Charles II. made love to one of these stout damsels, who repulsed him in a not very feminine manner. The adventure is preserved in a St. Malo ballad, the conclusion of which may be thus rendered :—

“ The maid her knitting tighter held
When Charley made his bow,
With such proposals as compell'd
The maid to knit her brow ;

And, guarded as her native town,
She felt no maiden fears
But calmly laid her knitting down,
And boxed the monarch's ears."

Within a couple of miles of St. Malo stands St. Servan, a fashionable bathing-place, which enjoys the advantage or disadvantage of being occupied by an English colony. I was considerably amused by a gigantic placard, in Gallie English, on the walls of St. Malo, announcing the various *agrémens* of an hotel at St. Servan, and, among others, that it "has the benefit and comfort of being close to beautiful graves!" the said graves being the translator's easy, though not very faithful, rendering of the French *grèves*, which means "sands."

I was vexed that, in consequence of the locks on the river Rance, being under repair, I was obliged to proceed to Dinan by diligence instead of steam-boat. I left St. Malo at four in the afternoon, and arrived at my destination at eight; the distance is only twenty-one miles, but French diligences are proverbially slow coaches. During the drive I was introduced to Breton beggars, who, by their wealth of rags and persevering importunity, might claim kindred with those of Ireland. In one respect they evinced ingenuity superior to that of Irish mendicants; those who were lame, instead of using crutches, were sup-

ported by enormous go-carts on large wheels, by which means they contrived to shuffle along as fast as those who enjoyed the use of their limbs.

The approach to Dinan has recently been shorn of its difficulties. The town, which was one of the strongholds of Brittany, is built on a considerable eminence, surrounded on three sides by a defile nearly three hundred feet deep, watered by the Rance. Formerly the road was carried zigzag fashion down and up the steep sides of the gorge, and the traveller entered the town in true feudal style through ancient gates. Now the defile is spanned by a noble granite viaduct, over which you pass into Dinan with great ease : it may not be so romantic as the old route, but is decidedly more convenient, and the views from the centre of the viaduct are among the finest near Dinan. As it was nearly dark when we crossed, I saw little of the scenery or of the town ; but an early walk the following morning satisfied me that the beauties of Dinan have not been exaggerated, and that it is a very eligible place to rest in for some days. Accordingly I set out to seek for lodgings, which I found without any difficulty, and in the course of an hour I became the tenant of a French gentleman who had served under the “grand Napoléon,” and rejoiced in the title and rank of *ci-devant Capitaine des Dragons*. He was a widower, but the domestic

blank occasioned by the death of his wife was, as far as I was concerned, pleasantly filled by his two daughters, who, although highly educated, were not too proud to minister to my comforts in the matter of sundry household arrangements.

Prior to 1848 Dinan was a little English colony, but the Revolution which shook Paris in that year alarmed many English families in the provinces, who left France never to return. Dinan was among the places affected by this panic, and now the English tourist will find perhaps, to his satisfaction, that there are not above one hundred of his countrymen in the town : thus lodgings, which formerly were scarce and dear, are abundant and reasonable. Provisions however have risen in price, and are much more expensive than they were before the commencement of the present war. "Two years ago," said a thrifty French housewife to me, "we bought vegetables by the basketful ; now, would you believe it, Sir, they sell them *par la pièce !*" a custom to which, as I told her, we have unfortunately long been used. Notwithstanding this change, Dinan is, compared with our towns, a cheap abiding-place, as a proof whereof I may mention that I was most comfortably lodged and boarded for five francs a day.



Dinan.

CHAPTER V.

THE BEAUTIES OF DINAN.—ITS GREAT ANTIQUITY.—THE CASTLE OF THE DUCHESS ANNE.—HENRI IV.—DUGUESCLIN.—COMBAT WITH CANTORBÉRY.—THE KNIGHT'S HEART.—ST. SAUVEUR.—THE DONKEYS OF DINAN.—LA BELLE ANGLAISE.—THE LOVERS.—ABBEY OF LÉHON.—LEGEND OF ST. MAGLOIRE.—THE BEAU-MANOIR.—CASTLE OF LÉHON.—CROSS OF ST. ESPRIT.—LUNATIC ASYLUM.—PAUVRES FRÈRES.—STRUGGLE WITH A LUNATIC.—CHEMINS VICINAUX.—THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR.—DEATH-CROSSES.—CRUCIFIXES.—THE RANCE.—CAPTURE OF MULLETS.—EXCURSION TO COMBOURG.—CHATEAUBRIAND'S CHATEAU.—CHAMBRE DES MORTS.—THE POET'S GROVES.—FISHING LAWS.—GOVERNMENT INSPECTORS.—A DISHONEST APOTHECARY.

DINAN has been compared, with its girdle and corset of ancient walls and towers embroidered with gardens and overflowing with lovely flowers, to a young girl trying on a suit of old armour over a ball-dress. The

comparison is not unhappy; for the eye is perpetually struck by the contrast between crumbling antiquity and the freshness of perpetually renewing nature. In truth it would be difficult to conceive a more delightful spot to dream away long summer evenings than in one of the numerous gardens which fringe the town-walls, and command magnificent panoramic views of the richly wooded country, famous for the abundance of game sheltered by the forests.

History tells us that Dinan, formerly Dionacum, was dedicated to Diana, so that the chase has long flourished in its neighbourhood. Looking over my notes, I find so many jottings of excursions made during my sojourn in this town, that, remembering I have to chronicle numerous scenes and adventures in wild parts of Brittany less known to the reader than the country in which Dinan is situated, I must confine myself to a few sketches within and without that pleasant town.

Among the numerous ancient buildings of high architectural interest which adorn Dinan, the old castle, built in 1380 by Jean IV., Duke of Brittany, when he was at war with England, holds the first place. It consists of a huge tower, standing like a mighty sentinel on the verge of the slope near the gate of St. Louis, and is, considering its age and the many hard blows that it has sustained, in admirable

preservation. Anne of Brittany frequently resided in this stronghold, which is often called “Le Château de la Duchesse Anne,” and the stone chair is pointed out which she occupied during her devotions in the chapel.* Alas for modern changes ! this chapel and the noble halls where the States of Brittany met, echo the clank of chains, as the castle is now a prison. During the wars of the first Napoleon it was occupied by unfortunate English officers, who were crowded so closely that a pestilence broke out and spread with fatal results through the town. A small garden between two flanking walls retains the name of the “Parc aux Anglais.” The visitor should not omit ascending to the summit of the building, where he will see the bold stone watercourses carried out like flying buttresses ; beautifully carved crenelles, supported by long corbels ; fine Gothic windows, and a view of great magnificence, gorgeous with golden glory when backed by the light of the setting sun.

* The tourist in Brittany will often be reminded of La Duchesse Anne, whose name is still a household word in that part of France. Her magnificent ‘Livre d’Heures’ in the Imperial Library at Paris shows her to have been early educated to rule :—

“ Elle commença à penser nuit et jour
A ses affaires, comme vray Princesse ;
Tout le monde parloit de sa hautesse,
Nul ne pouvoit à droit s’aperevoir ;
Et sa grande et très-haulte noblesse
C’est un abisme à concevoir.”

The immense strength of Dinan, when its walls and fortifications were perfect, made its possession an object of great desire by the Kings of France.* The redoubtable Henri IV. said, that he was powerless in Brittany until Dinan was taken. When it had fallen, a rough warrior named Pepin was sent to Paris with the news. "Sire," said he to the King, "j'avons pris Dinan." "Not possible!" exclaimed Marshal Biron, who stood by. "Voy il le sara mieux que moi qui étas," replied the sturdy knight. Henri, who was overjoyed at the intelligence, offered Pepin nobility; but the latter expressed his surprise that meat and drink should not have been set before him, and added, "Nenny, Sire; mais faites moi donner un cheval de votre écurie, car le mien a crevé comme un pot." He had killed it by hard riding from Dinan.

Among the famous warriors who figure in the history of Dinan, Dugueselin holds a prominent place. When the town was besieged by the Duke of Lancaster in 1358, the Governor received great assistance from Duguesclin. It was on this occasion that, having been insulted by an English knight, Thomas de

* The Bayeux tapestry represents, in its usual quaint manner, the capture of Dinan by William of Normandy, with this running superscription:—"Hic milites Willelmi Ducis pugnant contra Dinantes, et Cunau claves porrexit." Conan is depicted presenting the keys on the point of a lance to William, of whom he seems to be greatly afraid.

Cantorbéry, who, contrary to all the rules of war, had seized Duguesclin's brother during a truce, and retained him as his prisoner, Duguesclin determined to be revenged in a terrible combat *à outrance*. Lists were prepared in the Place, bearing Duguesclin's name; and a truce was declared while the duel was fought. The Duke of Lancaster and the Governor of the town, with their respective suites, were present, and the Duke of Chandos, in a true spirit of knightly courtesy, lent Duguesclin an English charger and a suit of English armour. Ladies,—among whom was the beautiful Tiphaine Ragueneel, who foretold Duguesclin's future greatness, and became his wife,—graced the scene with their presence. Shortly after the combatants entered the arena, Cantorbéry's sword fell to the ground; Duguesclin threw himself from his horse, picked it up, and flung it over the lists. The act was nearly fatal to him, as Cantorbéry almost succeeded in riding him down; but Duguesclin, who had coolly taken off his greaves, contrived to avoid his foe, and killed his horse by a lucky sword-thrust. The contest now became terrible; for Cantorbéry being unhorsed the adversaries fought foot to foot, armed with daggers; at length Duguesclin seized Cantorbéry by the waist, overthrew him, and wrenching off his casque, put his dagger to his throat and demanded an apology for the treachery shown to his brother. The

English knight refused to make any ; upon which Duguesclin smote him on the face with his mailed hand and was about to kill him, when the Duke of Lancaster begged that his life might be spared. Duguesclin granted the request, but Cantorbéry, according to the laws of the combat, was placed upon a hurdle and cast down outside the lists as a mark of infamy. Duguesclin was then feasted by the Governor and the Duke of Lancaster, who said, " Brave Knight, happy is the King who is served by such a captain !" The inhabitants of Dinan rejoice in the belief that they possess the heart of this gallant knight, though there is too much reason to apprehend that the Revolution robbed them of the relic. Be this as it may, an inscription on a brass tablet in the church of St. Sauveur runs thus :—

CY : GIST : LE : CUER : DE
MISSIRE : BERTRAN : DU : GUEAQUI
EN : SON : VIVANT : CONETIABLE DE
FRÂCE : QUI TRESPASSE : LE XIII^e
JOUR : DE JUILLET : L'AN : MIL : MC
IIIIXX DONT : SON : CORPS : REPOS
AVEC : CEULX : DES : ROYS
A SAINCT : DENIS EN FRANCE.

Above the tablet is a painting representing the ceremony of transferring the case, supposed to have contained the heart, from the church of the Jacobins to

St. Sauveur, which was done with much pomp by order of Napoleon in 1810. Though educated amidst camps, and only happy when at war, Duguesclin was a religious man. His battle cry was “*Notre Dame pour Duguesclin!*” and it is recorded that he left money for three masses to be said daily for his soul.

The story of his death is touchingly suggestive of the warrior’s reverence for the church in which he was nurtured. When aware that his end was near, he desired that his sword might be brought to him ; kissing it, he declared that it had never been drawn but for the cause of his King and country ; and then, embracing his captains who stood around him, he charged them never to forget that, in whatever country they fought, the church, women, children, and the poor were not to be regarded as enemies.

Lamartine’s graphic pen, in his History of the Girondists, gives some account of the head of the illustrious knight, which, it seems, met with no reverence from the infuriated Revolutionists of 1792. The entire of the following passage is interesting, as illustrating the blind rage of the mob at that period against all rulers, past and present,—rage which rolled its mad waves to the uttermost parts of France, destroying, as the tourist learns to his sorrow, many monuments of rare beauty in Brittany.

“ A decree of the Convention had commanded the

destruction of the tombs of the Kings at St. Denis. The Commune changed this decree into an attack against the dead ; the axe broke the gates of bronze presented by Charlemagne to the Basilica of St. Denis ; they raised the stones, ransacked the vaults, violated the resting-places of the departed, sought out beneath the swathings and shrouds embalmed corpses, crumbled flesh, calcined bones, empty skulls of kings, queens, princes, ministers, bishops.

“Pepin, the founder of the Carlovingian dynasty and father of Charlemagne, was now but a pinch of grey ash, which was in a moment scattered by the wind. The mutilated heads of Turenne, Duguesclin, Louis XII., Francis I., were rolled on the pavement. Beneath the choir were buried the Princes and Princesses of the first race and some of the third, Hugues Capet, Philip the Bold, Philip the Handsome ; they rent away their rags of silk, and threw them on a bed of quicklime. They flung the carcase of Henry IV. into the common *fosse* ; his son and grandson, Louis XIII. and XIV., followed ; Louis XIII. was but a mummy ; Louis XIV. a black, indistinguishable mass of aromatics ; Louis XV. came last out of his tomb. The vault of the Bourbons rendered up its dead,— Queens, Dauphinesses, Princes were carried away in armfuls by the workmen and cast into the trench.”

The lover of Romanesque architecture will find

the church of St. Sauveur, which stands on the site of Diana's Temple, an interesting study. But indeed ancient Dinan abounds with curious buildings and winding streets, highly deserving the attention of the antiquary and artist; and when the latter is tired of old houses, he has but to pass out of one of the town gates, no matter which, and his brow will be speedily fanned by delicious breezes, and his eye refreshed and gladdened by landscapes of rare beauty. The generally veracious Murray led me, who am a great lover of equestrian exercise, to expect that Dinan would furnish riding-horses; for, as he states that delightful horse-excursions may be made in the vicinity of the town, it is a logical conclusion that horses are to be hired for the said excursions. My disappointment was therefore great when, in answer to various inquiries, I was informed that not a saddle-horse was to be had, but that there were several *ânes magnifiques* kept for hire, on which the visitors to Dinan, gentlemen as well as ladies, were in the habit of making excursions. The tourist familiar with German watering places will remember the large amount of patronage bestowed upon donkeys by *Herzogs* and *Grafs*, as well as by *Herren*; but he will also remember that German donkeys are for the most part sturdy beasts, with which our miserable asinine race cannot for a moment be compared. The Dinan donkeys are as

fine and large as their German brethren, and are capable of making long journeys. You will meet them in the shady lanes around the picturesque town, with their scarlet velvet saddles, bearing joyous parties bound on pleasant excursions.

The French, here as elsewhere, hunt pleasure in large companies ; the English are less social. One exquisite form lingers yet in my memory, seen more than once on my sketching expeditions. She was accompanied by a gentleman with whom it required no great penetration to perceive that she was linked by stronger bonds than those of friendship. I set them down as lovers, happy lovers, who cared for no possession beyond that of each other's hearts. Little did they imagine when riding side by side, her hand in his, that a sketcher was gazing on beauty far more bewitching than the fair face of nature which he had sat down to copy. It would perhaps have been right to have made them aware of my presence among the giant fern which mantles the lofty hedgerows around Dinan. But I had not the heart to disturb their blissful day-dream ; for the gentleman was evidently an ardent admirer of his companion, who was indeed most lovely. Once when he drew her attention to the landscape, the same which I was endeavouring to transfer to my portfolio, she turned her face towards me ; beautiful, most beautiful, were the features ;

England has rarely fostered a fairer daughter. The sunlight, which flashed through the matted roof of verdure, illumined her golden hair, which fell in clustering ringlets around her neck. Her feet, which the absence of a riding-habit permitted me to see, were of fairy proportions and were set off by an exquisite *chaussure*. Looking at the lovely vision in her flush of beauty and joyous spirits, I thought that she was the counterpart of the being in the mind's eye of our great poet when he wrote—

“There’s language in her eye—her cheek—her lip,
Nay, her foot speaks !”

Should these pages be read by any one who was at Dinan during the past summer, the original of this sketch will assuredly be remembered ; and the possessor of *la belle Anglaise*, as the lady was called, will, I trust, pardon this homage to her beauty; and, if his torch of love should burn again in shady lanes, he will perhaps do well to remember that sketchers are lovers of picturesque places, and have eyes to see more than the landscape before them.

Among the numerous objects of interest within a short walk of Dinan, the ruined Abbey of Léhon claims the first notice. The monks of old rarely erred in their choice of a site for their fine dwellings, and this Abbey, standing on a bank sloping to the Rance, forms no exception to the rule. Judging by the mag-

nitude of the present buildings,—which include a vast monastery, containing a hundred and thirty rooms, mostly, alas! filled with weaving looms,—the Abbey must have been a magnificent edifice, and one is puzzled to understand how its glory should have been dimmed in a few hours. Yet such is the fact: like many other noble structures it perished beneath the great Revolutionary storm. The old man who showed me the ruins remembers the fatal day. Sitting in the crumbling cloisters, his silver hair steeped in the sunshine, he told me how the mad mob, regardless of the sanctity of the place, rushed into the beautiful church, and in a few hours reduced it by fire and sledge-hammers to ruins. When appeals were made to spare the high altar and shrine, the rabble replied, that the saint's bones had paid a sufficiently long visit to Léhon, and that it was time they should be removed. They remembered the legend, which runs that in the middle of the ninth century Nomenoë, the thirteenth King of Brittany, told certain monks who had taken up their abode in the valley of the Rance, that if they could procure the skeleton or bones of a saint he would build them an abbey. The monks, unwilling to lose so good a chance, stole the remains of St. Magloire from a church in Jersey and carried them in a bag to Léhon; whereupon the King kept his royal word, and lodged the monks in a mag-

nificent edifice, to which he gave the name of “St. Magloire de Léhon.”

History records that various members of the famous De Beaumanoir family were buried in a chapel adjoining the Abbey Church. Monumental effigies, which were singularly preserved, and removed after the Revolution from the Abbey to the Mairie at Dinan,* are to be seen, representing gallant knights of the above name; and indeed it is alleged that the Beaumanoir, who bore himself so bravely in the terrible combat of the Thirty, is among the number. Within a short distance of the Abbey are the ruins of the Castle of Léhon, which crown the summit of a hill. Seven massive towers and flanking walls of great solidity remain to attest the strength of the place, which held out long and gallantly before it was taken in 1168 by Henry II. of England. Now the crumbling stones are garlanded by wild flowers and are scarlet with poppies, which luxuriate in the nodding battlements; while the keep, where mailed knights were wont to congregate, is occupied by a prolific orchard.

* The antiquary should not omit visiting the Museum at the Mairie, which contains many remarkable and interesting objects generally overlooked by tourists. Among the articles are various Roman sculptures, antique bronze remains, curious domestic implements supposed to have been used by the Celts, and relics of Théophile Malo, better known as “Le Premier Grenadier de France,” the title bestowed on him by Napoleon.

I made another excursion to the little village of St. Esprit, where a singular crucifix strangely escaped destruction during the Revolution. It is a very elegant structure, consisting of a light hexagon shaft, springing from a Gothic pedestal, to which it is linked by three flying buttresses. The top is surmounted by an elaborate Gothic sculpture, representing God supporting the dying Saviour, who is surrounded by figures. Local tradition attributes the cross to the Duke of Lancaster, whose head-quarters were at St. Esprit during the siege of Dinan in 1358.

Looking at this beautiful cross, which is wonderfully perfect considering its great age, I was prepared to assent to the truthfulness of an estimate made some years ago, to the effect that it would require 1,500,000 francs to restore the crosses of this nature overthrown and broken in the Department of Finisterre alone during the Revolution; for, as is well known, Brittany was particularly rich in these religious emblems; and even now, in out-of-the-way places, superb crosses may be seen, attesting the piety of past generations.

Near St. Esprit a large tract of ground has recently been enclosed, and vast buildings erected, which are devoted to the purposes of a lunatic asylum. The interior of such an establishment is always a melancholy sight; but as that at St. Esprit is entirely ma-

naged by a religious community, called “Les Pauvres Frères,” who have devoted much labour to the painful task of alleviating the sufferings of pauper lunatics, I determined to visit it. Passing through extensive grounds, pleasantly laid out, I came upon an extensive quarry, where the wild, and in many instances almost ludicrous, labour of lunatics was superintended by twelve *Pauvres Frères*, habited in long black robes. A short distance further was the principal entrance to the asylum, where I was received by the officer on duty, who conducted me over the establishment.

It was tenanted by 1300 male lunatics, 1140 of whom were paupers, and by ninety persons who had committed various crimes, and had been acquitted on the ground of insanity. Government support the latter, but all the paupers are maintained by voluntary contributions and the proceeds arising from lunatics in a higher class of life, who pay for their maintenance. Suites of rooms, well, and in some cases even elegantly furnished, are appropriated to these private patients, who are cared for with the utmost solicitude. Small gardens are attached to each residence, and confinement is rendered less apparent by the external iron bars being placed opposite to the sash-bars. I was surprised to hear that among the private patients are some of our countrymen. Personal restraint is not allowed, violence being checked

by confinement in a padded room. This mild system, which is now adopted in all well-regulated establishments for the insane, entails a necessity for strict watching, in spite of which terrible catastrophes sometimes occur. A short time before my visit, a lunatic had contrived to get a *Pauvre Frère* into a corner, and strangled him before assistance arrived. Such tales make you feel rather nervous walking through the long corridors among the loose maniacs, whose eyes glare wildly on you; and although I was much interested by the establishment, which is a model of neatness and order, I was well pleased to find myself outside the gates, without having had personal experience of the strength of madmen, who, as I was assured, are *diablement forts* in paroxysms of insanity.

Here, as in other institutions for the insane which I have visited, I was assured that the presence of gaily dressed lady visitors has a most exciting effect on the poor patients; indeed I have heard a celebrated physician declare that he could always tell, by the excitement of the lunatics under his charge, when they had been visited by ladies in gay attire.

Fairer than ever seemed the fair face of nature without the walls of the sad house, whose inmates haunted my memory. Desirous of forgetting them I plunged into the first byway that I came to, and

in a short time became entangled in a network of narrow lanes, which intersect the country around Dinan. These ways, or *chemins vicinaux* as they are called, are a characteristic feature of Brittany ; they are generally of great depth,—grooves, in fact,—cut in the ground with steep banks ; during winter they do the duty of stream-beds, and even in summer are frequently very wet, in consequence of numerous springs which burst from their bottoms and sides. It is impossible to conceive the rich luxuriance of these hollow ways,—

“ All overgrown with trailing odorous plants,
Which curtain out the day with leaves and flowers.”

They are lined with an endless variety of vegetation, and canopied by trees, the branches of which are closely interlaced. As they are often impassable to the pedestrian during wet weather, paths are always to be found running parallel to them along the edges of the fields above.

It only required a short exploration of these very curious channels of communication to be, in the first place, lost as effectually as in a maze ; and, secondly, to realize the immense advantage which attended the Royalist army in the war against the Republicans, as long as it was waged in Brittany and La Vendée ; for the intimate acquaintance of the Chouans and Vendéans with these labyrinthine roads enabled them to

continually surprise and cut off the Republican troops, who were ignorant of the topography of the wild country through which they were marching.

But the uncertainty attending attempts to find your way through these roads, and the exquisite beauty of the vegetation, and its varied nature, give a peculiar charm to them. More than once I spent the noontide hours of a hot summer day within their cool recesses, pausing often to admire the gorgeous-hued insects flashing in the isles of light above the crests of lovely flowers : such beauties cannot be seen unmoved.

“ He liveth best who loveth best
All things both great and small ;
For the great God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.”

You are startled in these wanderings to see occasionally a cross half-concealed by the tangled plants. As you gaze upon the emblem of Christianity you think of the piety of the Breton who erected it in so lonely a place. But soon your eye catches rough characters cut on the shaft ; you draw the plants aside and read, “ Here was killed —— returning from the Pardon of —— on —— :

“ PRIEZ DIEU POUR SON AME ! ”

Your feelings undergo a change, for you learn that where all is now peace and loveliness, fierce passions

have warred against the soul, and dark crime has been committed. I shall have more to say about Breton Pardons by-and-by ; suffice it now to observe that these wayside crosses chronicling dark deeds are not uncommon in Brittany, and when cognizant of these facts, we no longer wonder at the large and often handsome crucifixes which almost always stand at the entrance to the *chemins vicinaux*, at the foot of which the peasant kneels before entering the dark gorges after nightfall, for the Breton regards the locality of a human being's death by violence with peculiar horror.

As I had been disappointed in ascending the Rance, the beauties of which below Dinan are highly lauded, I devoted a day to an excursion down the valley. The scenery is certainly lovely, and very similar to that in Saxon Switzerland through which the Elbe flows. At a small village called L'Écluse, where locks confine the Rance, I found the whole population in a state of wild excitement, caused by an unfortunate shoal of grey mullets which had contrived to get between the locks, but could not find their way out. Nets of every description were in requisition, and it was easy to see that the odds were terribly against the poor fish ; and so it turned out, for in less than an hour they were all captured and lay on the grass like massive silver wedges ; many weighed five pounds, and few were under one pound.

The return ride is even more beautiful than that descending the Rance, and the view of Dinan, below the bridge, with its girdle of ancient walls and watch-towers, is strikingly picturesque.

Leaving unchronicled other minor excursions, I must make the reader my companion in a pilgrimage to the fine château of Châteaubriand at Combourg, where the author of 'Attila' wrote many of his celebrated works. This excursion is what the French call a *forte journée*, Combourg being eighteen miles from Dinan. I was accompanied by my landlord, who, besides desiring to see the interior of Châteaubriand's residence, had business to transact at Combourg; *chemin faisant*, he told me how he was related to Breton seigneurs, and how jovially these lords live in their quaint old châteaux during the hunting season. Then he broke off into stories of his campaigning years, when the eagles of France gathered glory under the great Napoleon, and he showed me a medal which he had won at Austerlitz, and which he modestly wore beneath his waistcoat.

Our drive during the first ten miles conducted us through a succession of small farms, mostly under corn, which was being reaped, women generally gathering the harvest; for the men had gone to the wars, and it was rare to see one under fifty at work in the fields. Beyond these farms we entered a grand old

forest extending for several miles on either side of the road. My companion informed me that it is the home of numerous packs of wolves, which commit sad ravages among the farmers when pressed by hunger in the winter. Besides these animals there are many boars and foxes, which are hunted, or rather shot ; for *la chasse*, in these forests, consists in lying in wait for the game, which is driven through the woods.

The approach to Combourg is marked by several neat houses, among rich orchards and smiling gardens, above which the towers of Châteaubriand are very conspicuous. The situation of this castle is extremely fine. It stands, as it should, on the highest ground in Combourg, and the houses of the town nestle beneath its walls in true feudal style. After putting up our horses at the little inn, where a pretty damsel did the duty of ostler, we called on the agent of the present Vicomte de Châteaubriand, who not only gave us permission to see the castle, but declared that he would act as our guide. Passing across a vast yard, which has probably been often paced by armed knights in olden time, we turned to the left and came immediately opposite the entrance to the castle : this consists of a narrow portal approached by a flight of twenty-eight crumbling steps mantled with weeds. A strange approach is this, thought I, to a nobleman's castle,—for the present proprietor occasionally occupies

the home of his illustrious uncle. But the interior was even more antagonistic to all our ideas of comfort. Vast halls and apartments entirely unfurnished, and the *comfortable*, as the French call it, huddled into a couple of small rooms, *garni en garçon*, which the Vicomte occupies when visiting his estate.

These possess little or no interest beyond the fact that they form part of the castle. But there are others, three in number, in which I lingered long : they consist of the author's study, dining and sleeping rooms, and are nearly in the same state as they were when occupied by their illustrious tenant.

Lord of the entire castle, which contains a wilderness of rooms, Châteaubriand preferred living in these humble apartments. His writing-table and inkstand are still preserved. The former was covered with visitors' cards, who have vented their enthusiastic admiration of the author by wonderful productions in an Album placed on the table. A crucifix and *bénitier* are suspended over the mantelpiece in his bedroom, before which, it is stated, he was in the habit of kneeling daily.

- It is worth ascending to the upper story to see the strength of the building, and the manner in which the rooms are disposed to resist a siege. For the castle has undergone some hard blows, having been built by Junkennes, Bishop of Dol, in 1016,

and subsequently used as the residence of various Dukes of Brittany, who had to defend it against fierce foes. In 1761 it was purchased by the Châteaubriand family, and has remained in their possession ever since.

Four large and very picturesque round towers, cone-capped, stand proudly at the corners of the building, which is in the form of a parallelogram, and there are the usual machicolations for discharging melted lead and embrasures for artillery.

Of course there are dungeons; for the Baron of old seems never to have been comfortable unless he had such places for the incarceration of his enemies within his castle; and one room, called the *chambre des morts*, is pointed out, to which horrible stories attach, which are implicitly believed by the villagers. It is a dark apartment, of strange shape, and there may yet be seen suspicious-looking pieces of iron attached to the walls, which suggest ugly ideas of torture. Not far from this chamber of horrors is a narrow apartment, mentioned by Châteaubriand in his Memoirs, as the prison where his father made him sleep, although there were dozens of rooms unoccupied on the *bel étage*. The old Lord, who was a strange being, had a curious fancy to lodge his little household in rooms as remote as possible from each other. The establishment, consisting of

twelve persons, was, as the poet says, “quite lost in the vast château, where there was ample room for a hundred knights, with their ladies, squires, and pages, and the steeds and hunting-packs of King Dago-bert.”*

The minds of many children would have given way under the harsh and cold treatment which Châteaubriand underwent from his father; but he declares that his prison discipline, as he calls it, had a very wholesome effect. “When my father said, with an ironical smile, ‘Will Monsieur le Chevalier be afraid?’ it would have compelled me to lie down with a corpse; and when my excellent mother assured me, ‘that nothing happens without the permission of God,’ I gained much greater confidence than I could have derived from all the arguments of philosophy. My success was so complete, that the night-winds, in my solitary tower, merely served as the sport of my caprices and as wings to my dreams.”†

There are some groves to the north of the castle, interspersed by walks, where Châteaubriand used to spend many summer hours, but they are a mere fragment of the magnificent woods which existed in his days, the destruction of which he thus deplores:—“In the forests of Combourg I became what I am; there I sought for a heart which could sympathize with mine;

* Mémoires d’Outre Tombe, vi. p. 98. † Mém. vol. i. p. 135.

there I saw my family united, and there dispersed. Should my works survive me, should I be destined to leave a name behind me, some day perhaps the traveller, guided by these Memoirs, may visit the places I have described. He will be able to recognize the castle, but he will look in vain for the great woods ; the cradle of my dreams has disappeared like the dreams themselves. Standing alone on its rocky foundation, the old keep mourns for the oaks, the ancient companions which surrounded and protected it from the storm.”*

To the south of the castle a large lake reflects the castle turrets. The best view of the building is obtained from the extremity of this piece of water, and the sketcher who desires to possess a *souvenir* of the place should go there. While I was sketching, numerous fish were continually leaping out of the lake, many of large size. The sight made me, who am a brother of the angle, long to have a rod in my hand instead of a pencil ; but, as I heard afterwards, it would have been of no avail, as the piscatorial laws of M. de Châteaubriand order that the lake shall be only fished triennially; two years being allowed for the fish to increase and multiply, during which time neither net or line are allowed to be used. At the time of my visit the fish were enjoying their second year’s

* Mém. vol. i. p. 129.

immunity from capture, and seemed to be aware of the fact, as they sprang out of the water almost at my feet. This year they will be gathered to their fathers ; and as the Lord of Châteaubriand allows strangers to angle during the fishing season, the reader, should he contemplate visiting Brittany, may take advantage of this information.

On arriving at the village inn, where we had arranged to dine, I was surprised to find a large table set out, instead of a *tête-à-tête couverte* ; and the landlord and landlady bustling about in a manner denoting that they had important business on hand. Presently, six gentlemen entered the room attired in black, and were received by the landlord with a deference which showed that they were no ordinary guests.

My curiosity being excited, I ascertained that they were Government Inspectors, making their half-yearly visitation of apothecaries' shops, their business being to examine the drugs and see that no one

“ Pestles a poison'd poison behind his crimson lights,”

without an endeavour at least to punish the evildoer. They travelled in a capacious private carriage, which, besides their luggage, contained various chemical tests for the examination of drugs. Their time of visitation is of course unknown, otherwise a cheating

druggist in Combourg would have taken care to have concealed his adulterations, which being detected led to the shutting up of his shop. This parental supervision on the part of the French Government is very much to be commended, and it is to be regretted that we have no such health-officers.

Thanks to our company we fared well at dinner ; excellent wine, in stone pitchers with venerable beards of eobweb, took the place of the harsh cider usually seen at village inns in Brittany ; and a lively conversation was kept up so long, that night had closed ere we arrived at Dinan.





Houses in Dinan.

CHAPTER VI.

HOW TO TRAVEL IN BRITTANY.—NATURE OF THE COUNTRY AND ROADS.—THE START.—CORSEUL.—ROMAN REMAINS.—FANUM MARTIS.—HOLY DISTAFFS.—PLEVEN.—THE BLACK FOREST.—THE CASTLE OF HUNAUDAYE.—ITS ROBBER LORD.—PICTURESQUE RUINS.—CURIOS SHEEP PASTURES.—GIGANTIC FERN.—PRIMITIVE PEASANT.—WOLVES.—LAMBALLE.—CARDINAL RICHELIEU'S REVENGE.—ARRIVE AT ST. BRIEUC.

To make a profitable and pleasant tour in Brittany, it is absolutely necessary to walk, ride on horseback, or travel in your own carriage; for if trust be placed in diligences, which have degenerated in that country into little miserable abortions called “Pataches”—if indeed they were ever larger—the tourist will frequently find himself on the road when

he expects to be in his bed. In short, the public conveyances in that remote and little frequented corner of France are few and wretched, and entirely unfitted for the traveller who wishes to see Brittany well.

Happily railways do not yet exist in this part of France. I say happily, for the tourist is obliged to travel leisurely over the country, and is thus brought face to face with much lovely scenery, which he would not see were he to sweep, comet-fashion, along the face of the earth. Indeed, with its many advantages, railway-travelling has at the same time many features disadvantageous to the tourist who loves the fair face of nature. Hear what an earnest writer and intense lover of beautiful scenery says on this subject :— “The whole system of railroad-travelling is addressed to people who, being in a hurry, are therefore, for the time being, miserable. No one would travel in that manner who could help it—who had time to go leisurely over hills and between hedges, instead of through tunnels and between banks. The railroad is in all its relations a matter of earnest business, to be got through as soon as possible. It transmutes a man from a traveller into a living pareel. For the time he has parted with the nobler characteristics of his humanity for the sake of a planetary power of locomotion. Do not ask him to admire anything : you might as well ask the wind. Carry him safely,

—dismiss him soon: he will thank you for nothing else.”*

Railways and public carriages being out of the question of choice, when the time arrived to leave Dinan, I hired a cabriolet, for which I agreed to pay ten francs a day, the driver maintaining himself and horse. I moreover made it an express condition that I was to start and stop at what hours I pleased, and to diverge from the highways whenever I thought fit. It is highly necessary to enter into a compact of this nature, as Breton *voituriers*, like those in Germany, are very fond of trying to have their own way, which will in all probability be very opposite to that desired by the tourist.

It is a golden rule in travelling to start early, not at those terrible diligence starting-hours which break the night in two, but at such a time as will ensure

“All the enjoyment which the summer sun
Sheds round the steps of those who meet the day.”

And as I hope that this book will dispose many lovers of picturesque scenery to visit Brittany, I am desirous of impressing upon the tourist the desirableness of his having a long day before him, when he starts on his wanderings in that country. The truth is, that independently of the rough nature of the cross-

* Ruskin’s ‘Seven Lamps of Architecture,’ p. 111.

roads, over which he must travel if he desires to see the wilds of Brittany, that province is so hilly, that what seems only a morning's walk on the map, turns out to be a good day's drive. Bowls placed side by side, with their bottoms upwards, give a correct idea of the uneven nature of the land ; and as the roads were made by those clever engineers of old, who,—not being apparently aware of the geometrical truth that it is as short to go halfway round the base of a hemispherical hill as to surmount it,—carried their roads over the summits ; the tourist is presented with a constant change of scene, for it never can be predicted for five consecutive minutes where the road will lead him. But these old-fashioned roads, which tend to prolong his journey, will, if he be not one of those fast travellers who consider that the only object in travelling is to arrive at the goal, be more a matter of rejoicing than sorrow, for he will gaze upon far finer scenery than that which generally characterizes plains ; and when climbing steep hills he must comfort himself with Sterne's philosophical reflection, that “there must be ups and downs, or how the deuce should we get into valleys, where nature spreads so many tables of entertainment ?”

With this not unnecessary preface, and a hint to give your driver, who is sure to be a smoker, occasional presents of tobacco, to keep him in good hu-

mour, the reader will be prepared to hear that on the first morning of my tour round Brittany I started early, and had placed some half-dozen miles between myself and dear old Dinan ere the sun had

“Dried the crystal drops from off the rose.”

But I had another motive for alacrity, as I had planned making a considerable *détour*, in order to visit the fine old castle of Hunaudaye, fourteen miles from Dinan.

Our road lay through Corseul, the site of the Roman Curiosolitum, which, according to Cæsar, was one of the largest cities in Armorica. Recent excavations have disclosed numerous remains of extensive buildings, including an octagon temple called Fanum Martis, forty feet high and thirty-six in diameter, besides various coins, bronze utensils, statues, and stones with inscriptions. Among the latter is a monumental tablet, preserved in the church, setting forth that it is to the memory of a Roman lady, named Silicia, who followed her son into banishment at Corseul. There is indeed no doubt that this place was a Roman station of great importance. At the fall of the Empire it was ravaged by the Normans, who committed such terrible excesses that the inhabitants are stated to have joined in the litany of the time,—

“A furore Normanorum
Libera nos, Domine :”

a vain prayer ; for, as Delavigne poetically says,—

“ Le laurier Normand couvre la France entière.”

Looking round the church I observed that the Virgin's chapel was full of distaffs, decorated with coloured ribbons and gold and silver tinsel. These, as I was informed, were placed in the chapel in order that they might imbibe holiness from their position, and be blessed by the Bishop at his next visitation ; after which they were to be sold for the benefit of the church ; the possession of a distaff thus blessed being supposed to bring good luck to the spinning household where it is preserved.

As far as Pleven, ten miles from Dinan, our road was extremely good, but beyond that town we plunged into a *chemin vicinal*, which rapidly became worse as we advanced. To have remained in the carriage, had we been inclined, would have been out of the question, for it rolled from side to side in an untenable manner. How the springs bore the concussions I cannot conceive, but I was well pleased to find that they came off without injury, as I thought it was not at all probable that they would be more severely tried during the whole of my journey. More than once I feared that we should have been obliged to abandon the undertaking, as the road narrowed frequently ; so much so that the axles of our wheels became imbedded in the banks. However, our horse was strong and

willing, and by dint of pulling and pushing the cabriolet was dragged through. Presently we entered the great "Black Forest," in the midst of which La Hunaudaye is situated, and, after losing ourselves more than once, in consequence of the baffling nature of the roads, I had the satisfaction of seeing the turrets of the castle above the trees. I had heard much when at Dinan of the great magnitude of this structure, and was therefore prepared to see a huge ruined pile, but the reality far exceeded my expectations. Its vastness does not however immediately strike the eye, as it stands in a deep moat; but, on descending to the base of the towers and walls, their great elevation becomes strikingly apparent. The building is in the form of an irregular pentagon, with five towers, at the angles, eighty feet high, constructed with the peculiarity that, while they are circular outside, their interior is hexagonal and in some cases octagonal.

The castle was built in the thirteenth century, by Olivier de Tournemine, a mighty knight, who became a terror to the surrounding country. Indeed La Hunaudaye seems to have been a kind of predatory fortress, as we find its master in 1492 stopping the Bishop of St. Brieuc with his retinue, and detaining the Prelate until a heavy ransom had been paid for his liberation. During the League, Henri IV. ap-

pointed the Baron of Hunaudaye governor of the duchy in which it is situated, with power to levy taxes and fines, and Anne of Brittany resided in it occasionally, and indited letters from thence to her “Dear town of Dinan.”

The enormous thickness of the walls makes it evident that it could only have been reduced to its present state by gunpowder, and traces of explosions are visible throughout the ruin. Some fine specimens of carving may be seen over the doors and windows, and the stone steps within the towers remain and give access to the battlements. As I was ascending to these, I heard a rushing sound, accompanied by a blinding cloud of dust, which arrested my progress and obliged me to seek shelter in an adjoining turret. Had I disturbed the spirits of the departed, which, according to legends, haunt the grim old castle? Before I could recover from my surprise, or account for the disturbing cause, a flock of sheep burst from the whirlwind of dust and rushed down the stairs. An account of the castle which I read at Dinan states that goats may be seen browsing on the broad battlements, but I was quite unprepared to meet a flock of sheep descending from such elevated pastures.

The view from the summit of the towers is peculiarly impressive,—around, dense forest, in which the lover of solitude might revel for days in “leafy

luxury," broken only by the huge castle,—a grey island of stone in the midst of the dark-green expanse.

How changed since the days when the woods rang with the tramp of knights and the castle-halls echoed the minstrel's song! Now, as the ballad runs,—

"Les héros et les belles
Ont abandonné ces forêts ;
Du château les hautes tourelles
N'entendent plus leurs doux secrets."

The silence was almost overpowering, for it seemed as if from such a mass of building voices should be heard; but no, save the sigh of the wind among the grass-grown battlements, all was still.

Deseending the crumbling stairs I crossed the moat, now nearly dry, and proceeded to a sparkling rivulet a short distance from the castle. Here, embedded in fern,—some specimens of which were seven feet four inches high,—and canopied by spreading trees, I dined with great satisfaction on the fare which the kind and provident daughters of my landlord at Dinan had supplied. The spot seemed made for a dinner *au bel air*.

"Woven sounds of streams and breezes, held
My inmost sense suspended in their web
Of many-coloured woof and shifting hues."

But I could not dally long in idleness, and, favoured by the fine lights of the afternoon sun, which

illumined the noble front towers, I sketched the castle. While thus engaged, my driver went to a farmhouse and succeeded in procuring a lad to guide us out of the forest to the Lamballe road. It was a wild drive, and our guide was in keeping with the scene. His face was as bronzed as that of an Indian, and his dress consisted of coarse canvas buttoned by mere disks of hide. He entered our service provided with a huge wedge of black bread, from which he cut enormous slices as we drove on, and transferred them to his mouth with the piquant accompaniment of pungent raw onions ; this was his daily food. He told us that the forest abounds with wolves, and that in winter they frequently come in packs round the farmhouses howling for prey.

Shortly after emerging from the forest we struck the high-road, and as the evening fell arrived at Lamballe, where I slept in a room of enormous proportions, the centre of which was carpeted with a piece of old tapestry, which probably did duty once on baronial walls.

You will often meet with relics of ancient furniture in the inns of Brittany ; and if you are curious to learn the history of the venerable objects, you will very likely be informed that they came from neighbouring castles or *manoirs* now in ruins.

The following morning I rambled about the town,

and spent a long time in the very curious church of Notre Dame, which crowns the hill and forms a charming subject for a sketch. This church served as the chapel to a magnificent castle long inhabited by the Counts of Penthièvre, one of whom, having had the misfortune to offend Richelieu and not being able to beard the proud priest, was obliged to yield himself prisoner to the Cardinal, who forthwith razed the castle to the ground, but spared the chapel.

After making some sketches in the town, portions of which are old and picturesque, I resumed my journey in the afternoon and drove to St. Brieuc, fifteen miles from Lamballe.





Châteaubriant.

CHAPTER VII.

CHARACTER OF ST. BRIEUC.—FÊTE OF THE VIRGIN.—THE PRIEST'S BEGGING LETTER.—THE VIRGIN'S POST-OFFICE ORDERS.—THE TOUR DE CESSON.—CHATELAUDREN.—A PEASANT'S FÊTE.—THE RONDE DANCE.—CURIOUS MUSIC.—STRANGE CAPS.—DANGEROUS LAKE.—TERRIBLE CATASTROPHE.—STORY OF SOUVESTRE'S FATHER.—THE STREAM OF TEARS.—CHATELAUDREN BY NIGHT.—THE PILLOW OF DEATH.

ST. BRIEUC is one of the very few towns in Brittany which have cast off their ancient dress and flaunt in bright paint and whitewash. Thus the lover of picturesque architecture will lose nothing by leaving St. Brieuc unseen; for although it is really one of the oldest towns in Brittany, it has been so grievously modernized as to scarcely make it worth while to open a sketch-book. Here and there, it is true, you may

find a few ancient buildings, looking, in their position between stately modern edifices, as if they were ashamed of their dirt and antiquity, but the town generally is new and unsketchable.

I was not sorry however to spend a day in the place, as I came in for the “Fête of the Virgin,” one of the greatest solemnities in the Romish Church, which drew an immense concourse of people to the large modern cathedral. St. Brieuc, like many towns in Brittany, owes its origin to a Saint; for though the discovery of a few Roman remains attests the probable existence of a Roman station on its site, it is certain that the present town dates from the building of a monastery erected in 551 by St. Brieuc, who came over from Wales, and after qualifying himself by a religious education in Paris, proceeded to Armorica for the purpose of converting the Pagan inhabitants of that country. After various wanderings and adventures he finally settled on the site of the town called after his name. His reputation among Breton saints for sanctity stands very high, and the Bishopric that he established was, prior to the Revolution, one of the most famous and powerful in France. The cathedral, a large plain edifice, is indebted to these ecclesiastical associations for the veneration with which it is regarded by the peasants of the surrounding country. I saw crowds come pouring into the town to do

homage to the Virgin, who in consequence of the recent astounding Papal dogma is now regarded as apparently more worthy of worship than God himself.

It was curious to contrast the dresses of the peasants with those worn by the ladies of St. Brieuc, who ape the style of Parisian belles ; for as the town enjoys the privilege of being capital of the Department of the Côtes du Nord, it contains various municipal officees and a large number of gentry. As usual, few men above the rank of peasants or mechanics were to be seen among the dense crowd of worshippers ; for the modern French gentleman does not share in the piety of his poorer neighbours, at least as shown by attendance at public worship. So the vast cathedral was principally filled by women, the peasant-class wearing extraordinary caps, not however perhaps more fantastic than those contrivances patronized by ladies at the present day, indulgently called bonnets.

The Mass in honour of the Virgin was of course the great event of the day, and, judging from the jingling of money, I apprehend that the silver harvest must have been great ; sous however were not rejected, and indeed, as will be seen by the following copy of a document affixed in conspicuous localities within the church and on the doors, the priests do not regard centimes as beneath their notice.

“CATHOLIQUES DE FRANCE, voici une fondation assurée dans l’Église de l’Immaculée Conception. Une messe tous les jours ! une messe à perpétuité ! C’est une source intarissable de grâces pendant la vie. C’est un secours infiniment précieux après la mort. *Y voulez-vous un part ? Ce TRÉSOR VOUS EST OFFERT POUR UNE OBOLE !!* Heureux l’homme qui comprend que vaut une messe ! Marie ne compte pas la somme qu’on lui apporte, elle considère le cœur qui la donne. Si donc vous n’avez que des centimes, donnez des centimes à votre mère. Envoyez votre offrande en un bon sur la poste ! !”

A post-office order in favour of the Virgin ! Truly Voltaire never struck a harder blow against Popery than that contained in this advertisement. Few things indeed amazed me more during my tour in France last summer, than the extraordinary exertions made by the priests to carry out the instructions of the Vatican relative to the Immaculate Conception dogma. In every church indulgences were offered, on the authority of the Bishop of the Diocese, to those saying a certain number of prayers in the Virgin’s chapel ; and pictures representing her miraculous appearance to peasant children on the mountain of La Salette, near Grenoble, a few years ago, are to be seen throughout the country.*

* I happened to be at Grenoble shortly after the publication of

It is significant of the power of the Vatican that Napoleon III. has recently decreed that a portion of the cannon taken at Sebastopol shall help to form a gigantic statue of the Virgin, to be erected on the slope of the Puy de Dôme, the mountain on which Pascal learnt one of Nature's greatest laws.

With aching thoughts,—for it is always painful to me to witness the worship of the Virgin and Saints usurping that of the living God,—I left the cathedral, and, in a few minutes, was on the hill-tops without the town, from whence I enjoyed a glorious panoramie view of sea and land. The country round St. Brieuc is very beautiful, and the tourist visiting that town should on no account omit walking to the ruined Tour de Cesson, about three miles distant. The direct path lies over the shoulders of swelling hills, which, at the time of my visit, blazed like burnished gold with the flowers of the broom and furze. The former plant, which gave its name to our Planta-

this miracle, and well remember the impression it made, care having been taken to indorse the story with a Bishop's belief in the Virgin's appearance. Being much struck by the extreme gullibility of the people, I related the story in a book descriptive of my tour in the south-east of France, and was blamed by some reviewers for occupying space with such nonsense. But results have shown that the little cloud first seen on La Salette has overshadowed all France, and, if the Vatican could have its way, would darken the face of the entire world.

genets, grows to a great size in Brittany, and is cultivated for the purposes of fuel in large enclosures.

The Tour de Cesson was built in 1395 by John, fourth Duke of Brittany, for the express purpose of defending the port below it from the ravages of Norman pirates, who were dreaded foes of the Armoricans. An attempt was made in 1598 to destroy it by gunpowder, but such is the thickness and consistency of the walls that the explosion merely rent the building, leaving the greater portion uninjured. It is four stories high, and possesses the rather singular feature of the entrance being on a level with the first floor, which added to the security of its inmates. This feature is common in the Irish round towers, and seems to be an argument in favour of the theory that they were built for defensive purposes. I varied my walk back by taking a path winding at the bottom of a ravine, watered by a babbling brook. Here and there might be seen an old water-mill, unchanged probably since the days of Breton Dukes, and the equally old stone farmhouse, draped with gaudy lichens and canopied by stately trees, beneath which groups of peasants were seated, chatting away the Sunday evening. I was loath to leave these pleasant scenes, but I had strong internal hints that dinner was awaiting me at St. Brieuc, and I should be wanting in justice to the Croix Blanche if I omitted to

record that its *cuisine* is excellent, and that the hotel is most comfortable.

The following morning I journeyed to Châtelaudren, a small town on the Leff, fifteen miles from St. Brieuc, and purposed resuming my journey in the afternoon, when the intelligence that a large *fête* was to take place in the evening in the vicinity, led me to alter my plan.

The pleasures of a summer tour in Brittany are almost certain to be increased by the tourist meeting with large gatherings of the population at their festivals, which are celebrated in almost every town and village, or rather in their vicinity, large fields and woods being generally selected for the locality of the rejoicings. The festivals are generally of two kinds; one, and the most important as regards the religious and social features, is that called a Pardon; the other is a kind of fair, accompanied by dancing, but divested of religious ceremonies. I purpose, in the course of our companionship, introducing the reader to a Pardon, so at present I will only sketch what I saw at the *Fête* of Châtelaudren, which was confined to a fair and dancing.

There was no occasion to ask the way, as a stream of people was setting from the town to the festive scene. Ascending a long flight of steps on the verge of the houses, by the side of which a stream of water

descended, I came upon the banks of a large lake bordered by a path leading to a valley, watered by the Leff. Having followed the path for about a mile I entered a vast meadow, clothed by velvet sward, and fringed by noble trees, beneath which the river flowed. A more beautiful locality for a *fête* could not have been selected. A placard informed me that the meadow, justly called *Prairie Délicieuse*, belonged to a gentleman of Châtelaudren, who had for the third time allowed the fair to be held on his property, and added that, as on previous occasions no damage had been done, equal care would doubtless be now taken not to injure the trees or shrubs.

The large area was occupied by the holiday-makers and the usual booths found at country fairs; those devoted to refreshments displayed cakes, beer, and cider, the latter beverages being in great request. The dances, evidently the principal amusement of the *fête*, were most extraordinary performances, differing entirely from any dance I had previously seen; the strangest, called "La Ronde," was danced by upwards of a thousand persons. It consists in forming a gigantic ring, holding hands, and circling round sideways with a kind of hop-and-step jump, the arms being at the same time swung violently to and fro. The strain produced by the great number of dancers whirling round is so great as to make it extremely

difficult to retain hold of each other's hands ; many girls were obliged to give way ; then followed shouts of laughter as the dancers endeavoured to close up and repair the breach by joining hands. The exercise was most violent ; one round of the great ring sufficed to bathe the dancers' faces in perspiration, who however held out, literally,

“To tire each other down,”

for not until the girls could foot it no longer did their partners lead them away to the refreshment booths. Apart from the singularity of this dance, it is interesting from its great antiquity, being a relic of Celtic times, and is only met with in Brittany and Greece. The *Iliad* describes the dance precisely as you will see it performed to this day in those two countries. It is also worthy of remark that the voluptuous nature of the *Ronde*, which certainly recommended it to the impure manners of the ancients, is still one of the striking features of this dance in Brittany. The late Chanoine Mahé, whose curious and learned work on the Morbihan should be read by all tourists in Brittany, says that he considers the *Ronde* a very voluptuous dance and highly dangerous to the morals of youth.

The music accompanying this wild dance was of a very primitive nature. In the centre of a ring, seated on a platform half-a-dozen feet from the ground, were

three musicians, attired in fantastic garments; one played the *baniou*, or bagpipes, an essentially Breton instrument, another the flageolet, and the third whacked a cracked drum. From such materials melody was not to be expected, and the performers wisely abandoned attempting even to extract harmony from their instruments, contenting themselves with producing a series of groans and squeaks which, with the drum's rattling burden, sufficed to mark the time to the capering multitude around them. This rude music is the ancient and therefore legitimate accompaniment of the famous Breton Ronde; any improvement in the orchestra would be deemed out of character.

Though Châtelaudren is not in Basse Bretagne, where the dress of the peasants is as old as their buildings, yet the costumes at the *fête* were extremely curious, and as for the women's caps, photography alone could depict them. The spectacle of the great whirling ring, surmounted by the strange head-dresses of the girls, alternating with the broad-brimmed hats of the men, was most striking. Additional variety was given by several ladies and gentlemen joining in the dance, and entering with great apparent delight into the boisterous merriment.

The musicians were allowed but little rest, and when night fell upon the scene the dancers adjourned to the public *Place* in the town, where, by the light of

oil-lamps attached to poles, they continued dancing the Ronde until a late hour.

In walking back to Châtelaudren I was much struck by the dangerous position of the houses, immediately under the lake, from which they are only separated by a narrow neck of land. My attention was particularly drawn to this singularity, in consequence of a terrible catastrophe which happened some years ago, when a great rise of the lake caused the dam above the town to give way, and several houses and inhabitants were destroyed.

The sad story is related by Souvestre in his charming work ‘Les Derniers Bretons,’ and the incidents are so romantic and interesting that I am led to transfer them to these pages.

“If,” says he, “you arrive at a town beyond St. Brieuc on the road to Guingamp during the night, you will find yourself in the middle of a long *Place*, surrounded by large houses, from which no light proceeds and no sound breaks on the midnight air. But at one end of the *Place* you will see a large church, the windows of which are faintly illumined; a fresh and humid atmosphere will bathe your face, and you will hear the murmur of falling water.

“That dead town is Châtelaudren; that murmur is the waterfall from the lake, which continually threatens the destruction of the place, for Châtel-

laudren resembles Naples with the contiguous volcano : both have death for their pillow.

"On the 13th of August, 1773 (number doubly fatal), the largest house in the town was brilliantly lighted ; laughter, mingling with music, issued in bursts from the open windows, for there was a ball in the house. At the door stood a handsome girl, dressed in white muslin and pink satin shoes, her hands clasping those of a young man in riding costume, whose arm retained the bridle of a horse ; they were lamenting the necessity of separating just as the ball was about to commence ; but the orders he had received were imperative ; the young man had a long ride before him along the bad roads of St. Cled, —delay was out of the question.

"After embracing his betrothed he sprang upon his horse and galloped wildly away, apparently desirous of forgetting his vexation by rapidity of motion. But he was only seventeen years old, and he had engaged to dance the first minuet with the girl in the sandalled satin shoes.

"When he had surmounted the hill above the town, he paused to listen, fancying he might catch strains of music from the festive scene ; but he only heard the waves of the lake breaking on the shore, and the waterfall, which had increased in size in consequence of the swollen state of the Stream of Tears (the Bre-

ton name for the Leff) ; he sighed and went on his way.

“ Presently the storm increased in violence. The thunder roared, the lightning divided the darkness, the rain fell in torrents, and the earth trembled. The rider was nine miles from Châtelaudren when he thought he heard strange rushing sounds proceeding from the town ; but he rode on, comparing his situation to that of his friends at the ball, and he envied them their happiness.

“ At that moment they were dead ; the lake had burst, and the town was submerged.

“ The young man heard the sad news the following morning, and flew to the scene : alas ! the chimney-tops were all that was visible of Châtelaudren ; there was three feet of water above the roofs. In vain did he try to reach the *Place*, the entire valley was filled with a rushing flood, carrying on its seething breast corpses, furniture, and crops. Two days elapsed before the interior of the town could be reached. Then he found his betrothed, with a rose which he had given her still in her bosom. That young man was my father, at that time Director of Public Works, in the service of the States of Brittany.

“ Since that day the town has remained as silent as a snail in its shell. A lamp burns nightly in the church, in memory of those who perished on that ter-

rible night ; and all acquainted with the story of the inundation think of the sad fate of the revellers as they pass those silent and dark houses, see the illumined church, and hear the lake when storms lash the waters to fury, for all retains the impress of a great disaster ; the town has not cast off its mourning."

Had the romantic author of this touching tale seen Châtelaudren at the time of my visit, he would have at least modified the last words, for a merrier party I never saw than that which danced beneath my windows, in the *Place* where Souvestre's father lost his betrothed. But when the last merry-maker had departed, and the lamps on the poles were extinguished, a pale light illumined the great church-windows, and a sound of falling water told that Châtelaudren still sleeps on a pillow of death.





Castle of Hunaudaye.

CHAPTER VIII.

A CHEAP INN.—RAVENOUS WOLVES.—ARRIVAL AT GUINGAMP.—MARIE DE BON SECOURS.—THE BARONS OF PENTHIÈVRE.—ITALIAN FOUNTAIN.—THE TRIEUX.—ANGLING.—DISH OF TROUT.—THE MILL TAIL.—TOUR DU BOIS DE LA ROCHE.—A TROUTY STREAM.—PICTURESQUE SCENE.—THE GUINGAMP WASHERWOMEN.—NOTRE DAME DE LA GRACE.—CHARLES DE BLOIS.—CURIOS TOMBSTONES.—LEAVE GUINGAMP.

“PRAY,” said I to the bustling landlady of the ‘*Lion d’Or*,’ who had managed to cram an amazing number of guests into her small inn on the night of the *fête*, “how much have I to pay?” Breton innkeepers have not generally learnt the art of making a bill, but simply inform the traveller the amount of his score; so, in answer to my question, the landlady drew a

lump of chalk from her pocket, and, as her knowledge of French was very limited, and my acquaintance with Breton unfortunately amounted to only a few words, she wrote on the wall “2 F.”; for this I had supper, bed, and breakfast, and though the fare was somewhat rough, yet it was good and clean. The bread was very sweet, and the butter delicious: the abundance and excellence of this commodity in Brittany is remarkable; lumps, shaped like a hat, were generally placed before me at the inns, sufficiently large to have buttered the bread at the morning meal in half-a-dozen boarding schools.

The drive from Châtelaudren to Guingamp is charming; swelling hills, clothed with luxuriant trees, mostly beech and oak; fields of broom, blazing like burnished gold; hedgerows and banks gemmed with wild flowers; and sparkling brooks bathed in rich purpureal air, made a landscape of rare beauty, which lingers pleasantly in my memory.

Chemin faisant, I overtook groups of peasants returning to their Breton homes from harvesting in the eastern Departments of France, where they had earned, as they told me, two francs a day, which is nearly double the wages given in Brittany. Besides these, I saw many female peasant equestrians riding *en Amazone*, evidently unconcerned respecting the extent of limbs shown, which always terminated in large

feet thrust into huge stirrups. Their steeds were very small animals, apparently however capable of great endurance, which is the character of Breton horses.

About five miles from Guingamp we entered a vast forest, famous for a population of hungry wolves. My driver told me that when he was passing along the road during the preceding winter, he saw a horse on the wayside which had been disembowelled by a pack of these animals.

I arrived at Guingamp in the middle of the day, and, having secured a pleasant room in the excellent Hôtel de France, went out to see the town. This is diminutive compared to St. Briuec, but it possesses far more attractions to the tourist. First, there is a church which will delight the artist, though the architect will be distressed by the barbarous mixture of Gothic and Renaissance which it exhibits. Within, or rather on the north side, communicating with the interior, is a chapel dedicated to the Virgin, which, in consequence of a very holy image of the blessed Lady, is decorated with unusual magnificence. In fact "Madame Marie de Bon Secours" of Guingamp is regarded as one of the greatest miracle-workers in France. Her Pardon, which takes place at night amidst a blaze of torches, is celebrated throughout Brittany, as may be seen by the following translation of the Canticle sung on these occasions :—

“ I have made pilgrimages to all parts of the country ; I have visited Tréguier and Léon, Vanneset and Carhaix, but there is no place consecrated to the Virgin so frequented by pilgrims as the shrine of Madame Marie de Bon Secours at Guingamp,—Madame Marie, the most beautiful star in the firmament.

“ She gives sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, the use of their limbs to the lame, speech to the dumb, and health to the sick.

“ Inhabitants of Guingamp, and ye who live near that town, ye can want for nothing. Blessed is the ground that possesses Marie,—Madame Marie de Bon Secours, Mother of Sinners !”

We must not however be surprised at the affection felt by the inhabitants of Guingamp for their beloved Notre Dame. For they sincerely believe that when the town was taken by the French in 1488, and the citizens were threatened to be put to the sword, Anne of Brittany rushed to the chapel of Notre Dame de Bon Secours, and prayed that her people might be delivered from their enemies. The prayer was heard ; the French were driven from Guingamp with great loss, and the intercession of “ Madame Marie” forms the subject of one of the most popular Breton ballads.

The church is supported by many pillars, with quaint capitals and shafts embossed by fantastic heads. Both the church and adjoining chapel contained nu-

merous peasant worshippers in picturesque costumes, muttering prayers in Breton.

Reading of the might of Guingamp's Barons of Penthièvre, who ruled the surrounding country in their grim castle, by turns the scourge, glory, and defence of the town, you naturally look for some vestige of the vast pile ; but not a stone remains. You are shown a large square, planted with trees, where the Guingampians walk on summer evenings, and you are told that there stood the castle. A curious chronicle in the town archives records that the structure was surveyed in 1454, by a worthy who signs himself "Yres Guerguezengor, master mason," so that time alone would not have so entirely destroyed the building as to leave no vestige even of the walls ; and indeed another town-chronicle has an account of a jolly supper given in the castle to a company of renowned warriors, nearly a century subsequent to the date of the survey.

Happily for the artist, though the castle has disappeared, portions of the town walls and several houses, centuries old, remain, black, dirty, crooked, and quaint, which tell famously in a sketch.

A fountain opposite the church is another very picturesque feature ; the principal portion is made of lead, richly wrought into a variety of emblematic figures, which discharge water. Tradition assigns the

workmanship of this elegant work of art to Italian artists, probably with some truth, as it was executed in the fifteenth century, about which period many Italian metal-workers visited France.

Having heard that the scenery of the river Trieux, which flows through Guingamp, is extremely beautiful above the town, and moreover that it abounds with trout, I exchanged my sketch-book for my rod, and as the heat of the day was subsiding, strolled up the river. Crossing this near the town, I followed a lane for about half a mile, when I came upon a charming old mill, green with moss, with a spouting wheel at either side. The fly-fisher has always a great fondness for water-mills, as he knows that lusty trout love to haunt the deep pools fed by the rushing mill-stream. A glance was sufficient to make me aware that if trout existed in the Trieux, they were to be found below this mill. But, as I gazed wistfully at the deep pool flecked by foam, thoughts came over me of the sacred nature of such spots at home, and how strictly the miller guards his mill-tail from the non-privileged angler; so before putting up my rod, I thought it would be wise to ascertain whether permission would be given to fish. Passing through the whitened atmosphere about the door, "made misty by the floating meal," I found the miller busy among his corn-sacks; and as he fortunately spoke French,

I was soon made aware that I was free to fish not only the mill-tail but the entire river .Acting on this information, I adjusted my tackle, put up a small red hackle, and, before five minutes had elapsed, became practically aware that there are trout in the Trieux. The miller's pool yielded seven lovely fish, and had I chosen to wade, I have no doubt the spoil would have been increased. But I preferred ascending the river: and what a walk is that along the banks of the beautiful stream, now canopied by nature's architecture, and now springing to light and tumbling over moss-grown rocks !

Some quaint old *manoirs* are to be seen among the trees, one of which, the Tour du Bois de la Roche, is well worth turning aside to visit. I was much struck by numerous stone stiles, covered with Latin inscriptions, not too indistinct to baffle the deciphering powers of a learned antiquary. I made several inquiries respecting these stones, but could gain no information about them. The majority of farmers whom I addressed spoke only Breton, and those who were masters of French knew nothing of their history. But the Breton is not communicative.

About a couple of miles from Guingamp I came to another mill, built on a bridge communicating with a small island, which commands a beautiful stream of the most trouty nature imaginable. As it was impos-

sible to fish this from the main bank of the river, I requested permission to pass through the mill to the island. Leave was at once granted, and having succeeded, though with some difficulty, in getting my rod safely through the machinery, which was employed weaving linen, I emerged on the island. I had not miscalculated the piscatory wealth of the water; the trout were even more numerous than I had supposed. In the course of an hour I caught two dozen, mostly small, but, as I was basketless, I was unable conveniently to carry home more and ceased fishing. The trout around the island had evidently not been recently disturbed, and if the lady of the mill (who, by the way, lives in a charming old château on the little island) gives the angling tourist permission to fish, I am sure that he need not go further than this picturesque spot to fill his basket, or at all events capture a dish of trout.

That night I supped well; and, as I have no silly scruples respecting eating the produce of my gun or rod, I came to the conclusion that Breton trout deserve the high reputation for sweetness which they enjoy. Those I caught were mostly small, not however the less delicious on that account. Had I angled during the night-hours, I should in all probability have captured large fish; for your lusty trout, in summer-time, is fond of a late supper, taking a long

siesta during the noontide heat, from which the most tempting bait fails generally to lure him.

Conceiving however that half the charm of fly-fishing lies in the contemplation of the generally exquisite scenery to which the angler is introduced, I hold night-fishing, when you go stumbling through the dark country and not unfrequently into the river, as a disagreeable poaching kind of sport; but as some angling readers may differ with me on this point, I am bound to tell them that heavy trout are to be captured in the rivers of Brittany by night-fishing, and that, as I was informed, the large trout which I saw at the inns were caught by dapping with an artificial moth during midnight hours.

The following morning I was up early; for I had taken note the previous evening of an exquisite view of the very picturesque town surmounted by the church towers seen from the opposite side of the river, where it is crossed by large stepping-stones.

The sketcher who is not master of his time has a terrible enemy, as well as friend, in the sun; for it frequently happens that when he has leisure to sketch a scene the lights are all wrong, and when they are right, and the sun is no longer in his face, he cannot pause in his journey to draw. Having been not unfrequently in this dilemma, I have often risen with the sun in order to carry away a souvenir of some

picturesque scene. Indeed I have always found in my holiday tours that sketching and angling are famous provocatives of early rising.

I thought, as I threaded the singularly narrow lanes which intersect Guingamp, that I was the only person stirring; but on arriving at the stepping-stones I found a colony of washerwomen plying their battering vocation by the side of the clear stream, whacking the linen with large *battoirs*.

Placing my stool behind them, I sat down to sketch, and never mourned more my inability to draw figures artistically than on that occasion. It was such a scene as Harding would have delighted in sketching, and I must record that not only were the figures in the foreground highly picturesque, but almost all the girls were so pretty, that I found myself frequently turning from the buildings which I could draw to gaze on the Naiads before me, whom I could not transfer to my paper with satisfaction to myself.

There was one, a girl of some eighteen years of age, who might have sat for a Hebe; she came to the riverside bearing on her head a species of tub such as the washerwomen in Brittany use for kneeling in while they wash. She stopped close to me and put her tub down, which was filled with enormous slices of black bread flanked by huge lumps of butter. She then sat on one of the stepping-stones within a few

feet of me. Thus far, all her motions were graceful, but, alas ! how small a thing destroys sentiment ! Seizing one of the black wedges in her delicate white hand (blanched by washing) she plastered one side with butter, using her right thumb for the operation, and handed it to one of her companions. In this manner she dealt with all the slices, distributing them to the women around her, who seemed to relish them not the less for the absence of a knife. A lover of the Rousseau school or of the pretty girl would doubtless have esteemed them all the more on this account. After breakfast, at which my trout met with increased favour, I went to see Notre Dame de Grâce, a very beautiful church about three miles from Guingamp. The interior is full of curious wood-carving—wonderfully-formed animals sporting among leaves, the outlines of which represent nightmare kind of faces. One door-panel shows a curious judicial process between a saint and a devil, who are balancing the good and evil deeds of a man. The saint holds the scales, into which he is putting all the holy and good actions of his client ; while the devil is heaping up on the other side his crimes and vices. The carving is admirably executed, and the artist has cleverly left it a matter of vexatious uncertainty whether the good or evil prevails. The walls are surmounted by a deep oak cornice richly wrought, and the ends of

the huge beams in the open roof are carved to resemble the mouths of fabulous monsters.

Rich as this edifice is still in tracery and sculpture, we now see but a wreck of the magnificence which formerly distinguished the fine structure. Having been erected by Charles de Blois, famous for his munificence in ecclesiastical works, at a time when no expense was spared to decorate the house of God, is sufficient evidence that great pains were taken to render the fane lovely and rich. Though situated in a secluded village, it was terribly mutilated during the great Revolution. An extraordinary monument stands near the altar to the memory of Charles de Chastillon, Duke of Brittany, who, according to the inscription, was killed at the great battle of Auray in 1364, having previously fought in no less than eighteen battles to the glory of God and the discomfiture of his enemies. Valiant men were those ancient Dukes of Brittany ! The churchyard of this venerable edifice teems with relics of the dead. Here I saw, for the first time, receptacles in the tombstones for holy water ; and where the graves were unmarked by stones, small bottles or jars rested on the sod, each containing a little brush or sprig of yew for the purpose of sprinkling the grave with the blessed liquid. Numerous devout peasant mourners paid this reverence to the dead while I was examining the exterior of the

church, and all prostrated themselves previously before a superbly carved stone cross at the entrance to the churchyard. This was evidence that I was near La Basse Bretagne, where deep piety goes hand-in-hand with superstition.

You must climb the church-spires to see how admirably the architects of the Breton churches performed their work. Their names are generally unknown, but you will probably be told they were Englishmen ; for there is a traditional belief among Bretons that their churches were built by our countrymen, who have the credit of having done many wonderful things in Brittany. It would be well if our architects built such churches now.





Houses in Lannion.

CHAPTER IX.

DRIVE TO PAIMPOL.—KAERFERT CHURCH.—CALVARY.—SKULL-COFFINS.—CURIOS CUSTOM.—“ARE YOU A CLERGYMAN?”—CHEAPNESS OF PAIMPOL.—THE ABBEY OF BEAUPORT.—ANCIENT FURNITURE.—EXTRAORDINARY RISE OF TIDE.—LEZARDRIEUX.—A DROWNED MAN.—LA ROCHE AIGTE.—PLEASING ADVENTURE.—A BRETON PARADISE.—ANCIENT STRONGHOLD.—A ROUGH DRIVE.—TRÉGTIER.—THE CATHEDRAL.—SKETCHING UNDER DIFFICULTIES.—THE LONELY MAJOR.—NOTRE DAME DE LA HAINE.—A BRETON HOVEL.—LANNION.—QUAINT BUILDINGS.—CONGER EELS.—PERROS GUIREC.—THE LAND OF KING ARTHUR.—THE ISLAND OF AGALON.—TRADITIONARY LOVE FOR THE MEMORY OF KING ARTHUR.—BALLAD OF BALLE ARZUR.—PLEUMŒUR.— HUGE MENHIR.

THE following day I drove to Paimpol, a small town at the head of a bay of that name. On my way I turned aside to see the church of Kaerfert, being at-

tracted by the quaintness of the architecture and a beautiful Calvary in the adjoining burial-ground. After examining the cross, which is singularly perfect, I entered the church porch, where I saw a curious exhibition. About ten feet from the ground were ranged some two or three hundred little black boxes, shaped like a dog's kennel, with sloping roofs, two feet long, one broad, and one deep, having a heart-shaped opening at one end, which was generally surmounted by a cross. Within and close to the aperture of each box appeared a skull, scowling strangely with orbless sockets on the spectator.

Above the opening were the words in white letters, “*Ci gît le chef de—*,” followed by the name of the person to whom the head belonged, and the date of decease; concluding with “*Priez Dieu pour son âme.*” Many of the lower tiers of boxes had collapsed, from age and the pressure of those above them, and others were in a very ruinous condition. But the porch was not the only receptacle of these remains; the church contained many similar boxes, all of which revealed grinning skulls.

The curious custom exists in some parts of Brittany of disinterring the bones of the dead when they are supposed to be divested of flesh, and placing the skulls in these black boxes. Where this is observed, the larger bones are generally piled in an ossuary.

This edifice, which is called “La Chapelle des Morts,” stands near the church, and is constructed to accommodate tiers of bones.

The sketcher will do well to visit these buildings; as, besides their quaint construction, he will find excellent subjects for his pencil among the peasants, who may be seen at all hours of the day kneeling reverently before the osseous remains of their relations and friends.

Paimpol is a wild-looking town; the houses seem as if they had been cast down at random on the shore, and never put in order. The inn,—the only one, by the way, in the place, a fact more advantageous to the landlord than to the traveller,—is a very old house. My sleeping-room was of vast extent, abounding with huge beams and strange closets, from which I constantly expected to see figures issue clothed in the old Breton costume.

I was just sitting down to supper when the landlady announced that an English gentleman had heard of my arrival, and was in an outer room most anxious to see me. Marvelling greatly what acquaintance had turned up in this remote place, I went out to see my visitor. His figure and face were alike unknown to me; but before I could endeavour even to include him among shadowy remembrances of persons, he almost rushed into my arms, exclaiming, “Oh, Sir, are you

a clergyman?"—adding, "Pardon my breaking in upon you, but the fact is, I have a child who is very ill, and hearing that an English gentleman had arrived at Paimpol, I thought it possible he might be a clergyman, in which case my poor child might be christened before—" here his voice trembled with emotion. I was considerably touched by the gentleman's sorrow, and regretted my inability to perform the desired ceremony. He is, or was, the only Englishman in or near Paimpol, the cheapness of the living having attracted him to that secluded part of Brittany ; for, as he afterwards told me, the rent of his house, consisting of eleven rooms and a large garden, was only £10 a year ; meat averaged nine sous a pound ; other provisions were equally cheap ; fish most abundant ; and servants (rough hands however, according to his account) considered themselves well paid by the monthly wage of six francs—under £3 a year. Besides these advantages, the country abounds with game ; during winter the bay teems with wildfowl, and the woods with woodcock. These advantages, it must be admitted, in these heavy-tax days, are great recommendations in favour of this part of Brittany to the family man. But the disadvantages of a residence at Paimpol are not few, the chief being entire isolation from English society ; this may be thought by some advantageous, but the absence of

our countrymen is not recompensed by good French society.

The following day I made an excursion to the Abbey of Beauport, about three miles from Paimpol, situated at the head of a lovely bay, draped with heather, fern, and hanging woods, which are mirrored in the sea at high water. The Abbey is the property of a Polish Count, who is married to a French lady. They occupy an adjoining château, and obligingly allow *English* visitors to see all the ruins,—a compliment to our nation which deserves to be appreciated, as a notice suspended at the entrance to the Abbey-church sets forth, that in consequence of injury done to the Abbey by visitors, only the church will be shown. The Abbey is a very picturesque ruin, of vast extent, enclosing lovely gardens kept in excellent order by the Count.

The building dates from 1198, when it was founded by Alain Avaugour, Count de Tréguier. Part of the monastery remains, and is appropriated to farming purposes. Near this stands an old *manoir*, a fine specimen of a Breton farmhouse. I was conducted over the interior by a girl, whose affections I gained by giving her half a franc for a handful of apples,—all I would take from a basketful, which she insisted belonged to me in virtue of my payment. Wonderful are the sleeping arrangements in these Breton

farmhouses ! Box-beds in tiers line the walls, the least active member of the household sleeping in the lowest, while those lithe of limb climb to the upper boxes. The greatest care is taken to exclude fresh air; and although good ventilation is deemed essential to health and longevity, the occupiers of these *lits clos* live to patriarchal ages. Many of the boxes were handsomely carved, and I noticed other articles of furniture displaying rich ornaments. My Paimpol acquaintance told me that in the course of his wanderings in the country he had frequently seen handsome old furniture in farmhouses, and that he had made several purchases from the peasants, who were generally willing to dispose of their ancient heirlooms. A woman living in one of the oldest houses in Paimpol, who is said to be descended from the Dukes of Brittany, sold an antique bed and curtains to a speculative Jersey captain for fifteen francs, who boasted that a Jew gave him £10 for the gold lace on the curtains: pretty conclusive evidence that the gold alone was worth much more than the latter sum !

Having seen the Abbey, I strolled to the bay. The waters were out, and a vast expanse of sand lay stretched before me, covered with a multitude of wild fowl. A few small barks were lying under a headland to the right, dismantled, in consequence of their

owners serving in the French navy. I sat down on a bank to enjoy the wild and yet beautiful scene. As I gazed a murmur fell on my ear, and looking seawards I beheld a long dark line creeping across the sand. The tide was coming in with extraordinay velocity. I no longer doubted the assertion that a horse can scarcely outstrip the speed of the rising waters on this part of the French coast. In an incredibly short time the area before me was covered with water, which flowed to my feet clear, fresh, and beautiful. Casting off my clothes I was soon luxuriating in it ; and found that I was out of my depth within a hundred yards of the shore. This great and rapid rise of water is turned to account in the creeks, which extend far inland, on the banks of which several mills are set in motion by the flow and ebb of the tide. I spent some hours after my bath on the marge of this lovely bay, for now—

“The whispering waves were half asleep,
The clouds were gone to play,
And on the woods and on the deep
The smiles of heaven lay.”

The landscape was steeped in the light of a golden sunset when I returned to Paimpol, where an abundant supper of fish proved that the varied and excellent ichthyology of the sea had not been exaggerated.

I was strongly advised by the landlord to visit La

Roche Aigue, a curious old residence of the Dukes of Brittany, on my way to Tréguier. It was not far, as he said, from Lezardrieux, a village some four miles from Paimpol. This intelligence was corroborated by Murray, who states, or rather stated, the château to be near it; for the little error has been corrected in the new edition of the 'Handbook for France.' Acting on this information, I did not start from Paimpol until ten o'clock, whereas, as I found to my cost, I ought to have been *en route* at six.

A short distance from Lezardrieux, the Trieux, here a wide creek, through which the tide rushes like a mill-race, is crossed by a noble wire suspension-bridge, which hangs like a thread over the gulf. I found the little toll-house surrounded by a crowd of persons, among whom was an old man with long silver hair, wringing his hands in an agony of grief. Inquiring the cause of his sorrow, I was told that his only son, a fine young fellow, was lying a corpse in the house, having been drowned the previous day beneath the bridge. He was fishing from a rock, when by some accident he missed his footing, fell into the tideway, and, though a strong swimmer, was quite unable to save himself. The body had just been recovered, and crowds of friends and acquaintances were hastening along the road to see it.

After crossing the bridge we turned to the left as

instructed, and when we had driven a couple of miles, seeing a large château near the road, I came to the conclusion that it was the Roche Aigue, and was strengthened in this idea by some peasants pointing to it when I asked where that place was. Accordingly I bade my driver stop opposite the avenue leading to the house, and, walking up it, a nearer view made me certain that this was not the old ducal château of which I was in search, for the building before me was comparatively modern. This was confirmed by a servant near the entrance, who assured me in very good French that I was three long leagues from La Roche Aigue; adding, that I could not miss the way, as the road lay parallel to the river. Thanking her, I turned away, and had just reached the carriage when I heard a voice behind me, and looking round beheld an elegantly dressed lady, who politely requested that I would return with her to the house; adding, that the resident, who was an Englishman, would be delighted to see me. Now as the sight of a countryman in these parts is rather an event than otherwise, I accepted the invitation, and accompanied the lady back to the house. On arriving she threw the door open, and I found myself in the presence of a party of ladies and gentlemen, seated round a table in a spacious hall, covered with a variety of fruits and the usual accompaniments of a French

breakfast. An aristocratic-looking gentleman rose and received me very politely. Next to him sat a very handsome lady, who was equally courteous. Both pressed me to sit down to breakfast, and when I declined, on the score that I had already breakfasted, they volunteered to show me the gardens, into which we passed from the hall. These were extremely beautiful,—a very mosaic of rich hues, from the abundance of flowers and fruits which they contained. Beyond them the ground sloped gently down to the water, on which, within a lovely bay, lay a smart schooner yacht. Looking at all this beauty, I was not surprised at the remark of the gentleman, that having sufficient society in his charming abode, and ample occupation in agriculture and sporting, England was not regretted. I was pressed to prolong my visit, but I could not dally in the little paradise; so after receiving minute instructions respecting the road to the Roche Aigue I went on my way.

Jolt, jolt—thump, thump—over nine good miles of bad road; then I stopped the carriage where I was directed, mounted a high bank, and had the satisfaction of seeing the roof of La Roche Aigue among the trees. In the ducal days of Brittany it was approached by a carriage-road, but now only a cartway exists, which would be fatal to springs. Leaving the cabriolet under some trees, I crossed the fields to the château:

the situation of which is at once fine and romantic. Behind, at a great depth, flows the Trieux, whose waters here meet the tide. On either side of the building are dense woods, of comparatively modern growth. The château is of vast extent, and the exterior remarkable for the combination of defensive and ornamental architecture. Handsome mullioned windows are guarded by heavy iron bars, and the entrance is rendered additionally secure by a curious iron grating of enormous strength, to which the original bolts and bars are attached. Under the eaves are a series of apertures, through which the foe was repulsed by melted lead. The back of the building retains traces of having been strongly fortified. The interior was tenanted by four farmers and their families, and about a dozen horses. The quadrupeds occupied the baronial halls on the ground-floor, while the bipeds shared the upper rooms. Many of these retain traces of ducal grandeur: in one apartment I observed two handsomely carved oak bedsteads; the beds were covered with pieces of faded tapestry, which had been stripped from the walls; other portions were doing duty in a variety of domestic ways, and a boy wore a waistcoat made from this once costly material. The garrets in this strange old château are a perfect wilderness, connected by a labyrinth of passages, along which you will do well to walk cautiously, as some terminate in

oubliettes, and others are said to lead to subterranean communications extending beneath the river.

The entire building is so curious and characteristic of the manner of living during the Middle Ages, when rulers scarcely deemed themselves safe unless they were almost inaccessible, that it is greatly to be lamented that the proprietor, who is a gentleman living near Rennes, takes no pains to keep the château from falling to ruins. He had not, as I was informed, seen it for eight years, and was only solicitous respecting the payment of his farm-rents.

I shall not soon forget my drive from La Roche Aigue to Tréguier. In consequence, as I believe, of our misunderstanding the directions of the Breton peasants, we floundered among cross-roads, in some of which we nearly stuck fast, and had to walk more than half the distance. The inhabitants were wilder than any peasants I had seen, and their dwellings of the most wretched description; and yet the aspect of the country and the nature of the soil evinced that nature was ready to second agricultural efforts; but it is an old political-economy truism, that where nature is bountiful man is often idle and improvident.

It was with great satisfaction I saw the lofty spire of the church at Tréguier, one of the many ecclesiastical wonders of Brittany. The building, which dates from the thirteenth century, was formerly a cathedral,

and is sufficiently large to entitle it to take high rank among such edifices. It is remarkable for its imposing interior, in the form of a Latin cross, and for the extreme irregularity of the architecture. Many of the altars are profusely decorated with carvings. Besides a noble spire, there is a curious tower springing from the south transept, called the Tour d'Hasting, from a tradition that it was built by the bold pirate chief of that name; but, as Mérimée truly observes, Hasting was more renowned for destroying towers than for erecting them; and besides, the tower in question is a comparatively modern erection. The cloisters adjoining the church are remarkably fine, abounding with handsome pillars and elaborately carved capitals. These, as well as the church, are undergoing restoration at the expense of Government.

The paucity of tourists in this part of Brittany, and above all of sketching tourists, was made painfully and practically apparent to me at Tréguier by the curiosity that I excited. I had ensconced myself in a corner to sketch the church, hoping to escape observation; but not many minutes elapsed before I was discovered by a lad, who was apparently so delighted with my very humble performance, that, in a spirit of generous philanthropy worthy a better cause, he made repeated expeditions into the neighbouring

streets, until he had succeeded in drawing a most inconvenient crowd round me. Being pretty well accustomed to street-sketching difficulties, I maintained my position a long time, though the numerous and desperate attempts to ascertain what I was sitting upon—which nearly overthrew me and my sketching-stool—made it no easy matter; but at length I was obliged to desist, and packed up my little apparatus before my drawing was completed. This created great disappointment: many youths, who had climbed upon cornices to enjoy good views of my proceedings, gave expression to their feelings; and others, not doubting that I would resume my operations elsewhere, followed me through the town. Happily I had a refuge in the house of an old English officer, living on the skirts of Tréguier, to whom I had a letter of introduction. He was at home, and in the course of conversation I mentioned the persecution I had undergone. He accounted for it by the natural curiosity of the Breton, and the circumstance that Tréguier rarely sees a tourist, much less the extraordinary phenomenon of a sketcher.

"I settled here," he added, "forty years ago, because no English had made it their home, and I am still the only Englishman in the place."

It is a strange fact that Tréguier, with its magnificent church and large ecclesiastical establishment,

should possess a chapel dedicated to *Notre Dame de la Haine*. This stands on a bleak unlovely hill near the town. Superstitious peasants imagine that three *Aves* repeated with particular fervour in this building will infallibly cause the death of the hated being within a year; and to this day, when night darkens the scene, the malignant peasant skulks to the chapel and offers up prayers against the object of his hatred. This is truly a relic of Paganism, and especially of the belief entertained by the ancient worshippers of *Teutates*, that a prayer offered to that God was more powerful than the sword.

The country between Tréguier and Lannion is particularly picturesque. Steep hills alternate with deep valleys, dotted by farmhouses of a superior character to those I had hitherto seen. But here, as elsewhere in Brittany, husbandry is in a most primitive condition. Every household was to be seen threshing corn on a swept piece of road, or winnowing it by the simple process of throwing it up in the air and allowing the wind to separate the chaff from the grain.

Having occasion to ask our way, I accompanied the driver into one of these houses. The door could only be reached by crossing a dung-heap, which you will generally see near a Breton farmhouse. The interior consisted of a large room filled with various articles of furniture, including the universal box bedsteads. Near

these, suspended to the roof, were two cradles, or *bransels* as they are called, in which the infants are stowed during the night. By the side of the beds, on the floor, were four boxes, which contained provisions and served as seats. On a table in the centre of the apartment was a huge loaf, two feet four inches in diameter and seven inches thick. Above it hung a cover made of osiers, which is lowered, and protects the loaf from dust when the meals are over; for so ponderous is the Breton staff of life, that the loaf only disappears from the table to make place for another when reduced to the last extremities of attenuation. In some houses there are holes in the table which serve the purposes of bowls and plates, but which, as may be imagined, recommend themselves more for their convenience than cleanliness. But this virtue is not goodliness with Bretons, who conceive that layers of dirt are as effective in repelling cold as layers of clothes. The floor of the farmhouse I visited was *au naturel*, and water seemed to be considered a very unnecessary part of domestic economy. However, as our great poet tells us, luxury and pomp do not

“Sleep so soundly as the wretched slave,
Who, with a body fill'd and vacant mind,
Gets him to rest, cramm'd with distressful bread.”

And rude as the Breton peasant fares, he is probably far from unhappy in his humble home.

I was fortunate to arrive at Lannion on market-day. The extraordinary architectural features of this most quaint town could only be effectually rendered by that great modern artist—the sun. There is a group of houses in the market-place, which, for variety, strange design, and boldness of execution, exceed any buildings I ever saw in Italy, Germany, or France. You would imagine that the builders, ignoring all architectural types, had been anxious to try experiments in gravity, so narrow are the bases of the houses, and so large is their superstructure. Story projects beyond story, each more wonderful than that beneath it, all covered with grotesque figures and innumerable ornaments of the most fantastic nature, and surmounted by quaint weathercocks. Some buildings, finding it impossible to set themselves up against the laws of gravity, have subsided, in a manner more ludicrous than graceful, into queer positions, and stare strangely at their neighbours out of their great ox-eyed garret windows.

Picture all this if you can,—fill the market-place with groups of animated peasants in picturesque dresses, buying and selling amidst vast heaps of golden pumpkins, fruits, and fish; and if you be a sketcher of figures as well as of buildings, you may conceive what a treat awaits you at Lannion if you have the good luck to be there on a market-day.

Among the fish exposed for sale were heaps of huge conger-eels, which find great favour with the Breton peasants. On the score of economy this partiality is to be commended, as a conger weighing forty pounds may be purchased for sixteen sous.

Having revelled among the ancient buildings with my sketch-book during the morning, I devoted the afternoon to a drive to Perros-Guirec, a small port on the coast, due north of Lannion ; a short distance from this town I saw an extremely picturesque cemetery, with this inscription over the entrance : “ *Aujourd’hui est à moi, mais demain est à Toi, ô Dieu!* ”

My object in making this excursion was to see the country, which legend has peopled with the mysterious King Arthur and his knights. Every spot in this part of Brittany is associated with romance. Nothing can be conceived wilder than the rugged and torn coast bristling with jagged rocks ; and yet, here it was, according to the bards of old, that King Arthur held his brilliant court, at which his wife, the “ white as silver ” Guenarc’han and the lovely Brangwain dazzled all beholders. But the place has even more interesting associations connected with these semi-historic personages ; for although the monks of Glastonbury boasted that the remains of King Arthur rested in their monastery, the Bretons insist that the monarch’s ashes repose in the small island of Agalon,

opposite Kerduel, from which, after fulfilling the prescribed term of his residence in fairy-land, he will return to reign over his beloved people. This island is as black and barren as the opposite coast, and most unlike that lovely isle to which our Laureate sends the King, in his fragment entitled ‘*Morte d’Arthur*:’

“I am going a long way
With these thou seest—if indeed I go—
(For all my mind is clouded with a doubt)
To the island-valley of Avilion,
Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
Nor ever wind blows loudly ; but it lies
Deep-meadowed, happy, fair, with orchard-lawns,
And bowery hollows crowned with summer sea,
Where I will heal me of my grievous wound.”

“*Au moyen âge*,” says Villemarqué, “les Bretons de l’Armorique dans toutes leurs solennités chantaient cet antique refrain : Non ! le roi Arthur n’est pas mort !” and it is remarkable how the modern Breton clings with nearly as much tenacity to the legendary memories of his darling King Arthur as his forefathers did. These believed that before every battle, Arthur’s army appeared at dawn, riding over the dark mountain-tops, warning the people to arm ; and to this day the Breton Sôneur, or ballad-singer, is never more warmly applauded than when he sings the thrilling song *Balle Arzur*, or Arthur’s March. Ballads, as is well known, rarely bear translation ; yet,

as the reader may have some curiosity to read a rendering of this famous Breton ballad, the following translation is appended :—

"To battle, to battle let us go,—relation, father, son,—all, all, men
of heart, let us go !
The son of the warrior spoke to his sire,—
There are knights on the mountain-top,
Knights riding o'er the mountain-top on grey coursers, snorting
with the cold,—
Serried ranks of six and six, serried ranks of three and three, a
thousand lances sparkling in the sun,—
Serried ranks of two and two, following the flags fluttering in the
wind of death ;
Nine slings' casts from head to tail.
'Tis Arthur's army, I know, Arthur marching at their head on the
mountain-top.
If 'tis Arthur, quick ! bring our bows and arrows ! hasten ! hasten !
He had not finished speaking when the cry of war was heard among
the mountains :
Heart for eye ! head for arm ! and death for wounds ! in the valley
as on the mountain ; father for mother, and mother for daughter !
If we fall wounded in the battle, we shall be baptized with our
blood, and we will gladly die ;
If we die as Breton Christians should die, we can never die too
soon."

The shadowy forms with which romance has peopled this part of Brittany take another name near Pleumœur, a little to the west of Perros Guirec, where an enormous *menhir* and other stone monuments attest that the country was occupied by the Druids. These mysterious people were extremely partial to the coasts of Brittany, apparently pre-

ferring their savage features to the more smiling face of nature in the interior. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the south of Brittany, where, as I shall have occasion to show, large tracts of country near the sea are covered with stone monuments. The huge *menhir* near Pleumœur is an emblem of Christianity as well as of Paganism, for it is surmounted by a cross and its sides are impressed with Christian symbols. The temptation to remain on this wild coast was very great; but it is not exactly the place to be benighted in, and as it was, darkness had long fallen when I reached Lannion.





St. Pol.

CHAPTER X.

PLESTIN.—CHARMING TROUT-STREAM.—LANMEUR.—ENTER FINISTERRE.—CURIOUS CRYPT.—PAGAN RELICS.—SACRED SPRING.—ST. MILARS.—MORLAIX.—RUE DES NOBLES.—REMARKABLE HOUSES.—A ROBBER ARTIST.—PICTURESQUE INTERIOR.—ENGLISH ATROCITIES.—THE SAXONS' FOUNTAIN.—ADVENTURE OF A DOG.—ST. MELAINE.—PRAYER TO ST. MICHAEL.—SKETCHING EXCURSIONS.—ST. POL DE LÉON.—CATHEDRAL.—THE HOLY CITY.—EPISCOPAL SKULL COFFINS.—OLD BAPTISMAL TROUGH.—THE CREISKER.—EXQUISITE SPIRE.—ROSCOFF.—ISLE DE BATZ.—THE CHAPEL OF MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS.—THE PRETENDER.—WONDERFUL FIG-TREE.—DRUIDICAL REMAINS.—WILD PEASANTS.

If the tourist be an angler, he will do well to pause at Plestin, on his way from Lannion to Morlaix. The road, after leaving Lannion, proceeds round the head of the Bay of St. Michael; and then turning to the south, crosses the river Douron, which divides

the department of the Côtes du Nord from that of Finisterre. Plestin is near the bridge which spans this river. Leaving your horse to be fed at the little *auberge* in that village, put up your rod, brother angler, and stroll up the stream. If you are fortunate, you will catch a dish of delicious trout for your supper; and should the day be unfavourable for angling, or the fish too wary—I say nothing of your want of skill, a tender point to anglers—you will see a lovely river, murmuring through meadows enamelled with flowers, and a country presenting a constant succession of pastoral beauties.

About a league beyond Plestin you will come to Lanmeur, the first town in Finisterre. Here I was told to visit a curious crypt under the church. Desiring my driver to wait in the shade—for the sun was shining fiercely—I entered the church. In countries frequented by tourists I should have been met by persons eager to act as guides; but in Brittany the trade of *cicerone* is a very unprofitable calling, and the traveller is generally allowed to pursue his explorations unmolested. Not only was there no showman to be seen, but I found myself alone in the vast dark church,—darker to my vision, accustomed as it had been to the glaring light of day. Having been informed that the crypt was under the choir, I walked to that part of the church, expecting

to find the entrance. But I was unsuccessful, and after long exploration was on the point of abandoning the search, when my eye, now familiarized to the gloom, caught a narrow opening at one side of the altar. Looking within, I saw a flight of small and steep steps, which I felt certain led to the crypt, and heard the sound of falling water. Further exploration without light was out of the question; but remembering I had a wax candle in the carriage, I went for it, and having lighted it, descended the steps. My surmise was correct; they led to the crypt, a low narrow structure, supported by eight massive pillars, and having a groined roof, blackened by smoke. At one end was an altar, on which were various images, candlesticks, rosaries, and crosses; and at the other, a large stone trough, sunk in the ground, into which a stream of clear water was flowing. Continuing my researches, I discovered a heap of human bones and skulls in all stages of decay; and turning from them, my eye fell on the heads of snakes, which by the uncertain light of my flickering candle almost seemed to be alive; closer inspection showed that they were carved on the shafts of the pillars. These sculptures are extremely curious. Tradition assigns their execution to the era of Paganism. They are unquestionably of great age. Frémenville, who is an authority on Breton antiquities,

says that the church at Lanmeur is built on the site of an ancient city called Kerfeunteun, signifying ‘the place of the fountain,’ on account of a celebrated sacred spring which is identical with that in the crypt. It has been conjectured by other writers that the snakes on the columns are symbolical of Æsculapius, to whom the crypt was dedicated.

The animals display considerable vigour of execution. Some are hydra-headed, and twine round the pillars in a very life-like manner. Altogether, as may be conceived, the scene was not calculated to inspire very pleasing thoughts. No sound broke the stillness, save the constant fall of water, which caused the groined roof to fling back startling echoes. The solitude became oppressive; the idea too flashed across my mind that some one might enter the church and lock the grating at the head of the steps. The possibility of having to pass a night in the vault amongst those grinning skulls and stony serpents, was far from pleasant. I rushed up the steps, and, though not a timid man, breathed the comparatively fresh air of the church with great delight.

As might be expected from the superstitious character of the Breton peasant, this crypt is an object of profound veneration. The sacred fountain is supposed to be endowed with miraculous healing powers; and on the *fête* of St. Milars, to whom the church

is dedicated, crowds of believing rustics come from far and near to dip garments in the water, which is supposed to be on that day particularly holy.

The undulating nature of Brittany seems to attain its maximum irregularity round Morlaix. The hills near the town are more frequent, steep, and long than in any other part of the country. We had, in fact, an almost continuous walk from Lannion ; hill succeeding hill, until at length, having surmounted one of great height, the descent on the other side brought us into Morlaix. It was startling to come suddenly on handsome quays, fringed by ships, and lined by large houses which would not discredit the best quarters in Paris.

After driving through several smart streets, we stopped at the Hôtel de Provence, the comforts of which contrasted pleasantly with the inns in which I had sojourned. It was too late, and indeed I was too weary, to explore Morlaix that evening ; but the following morning I was up early, and ascertained by personal inspection that the genius of modernization had been at work in this ancient town, and that most of the old houses, with their wondrous fronts and picturesque forms, have given place to recent constructions, which flaunt in all the glory of gay colours. It would be difficult, however, to entirely destroy the picturesque character of Morlaix, which,

being built on the precipitous sides of three ravines meeting in the centre of the town, has given rise to the local proverb : “ De la mansarde au jardin, comme on dit à Morlaix.” And indeed the ground rises so steep behind the houses, that it seems but a step from the garrets to the gardens at their rear.

Although great innovations have been made around the Hôtel de Ville, there are some streets near the market-place containing several charming old houses. The Rue des Nobles is the most interesting of these. Formerly inhabited, as its name implies, by men of note, the houses were built in the grandiose style of the period. Their fronts are peculiarly rich in carvings, and figures of saints, kings, musicians, etc. alternate with a profusion of floral ornaments ; while the vast interiors also present many remarkable features. They generally contain a hall open to the roof, at one side of which a huge chimneypiece rises to a great elevation, covered with an amazing variety of ornamentation, and provided with an enormous fireplace, typical of unbounded hospitality. An open spiral staircase, richly carved, occupies a corner of the hall, and leads to various apartments disposed round galleries. Unhappily the fortune of the Rue des Nobles has sustained great reverses, and the houses are now tenanted by squalid poverty. Numerous families of the lowest orders occupy the once handsome rooms,

and, as may be supposed, the carvings and ornaments have not benefited by the change.

The houses in the Grande Rue, adjoining the Rue des Nobles, have been more fortunate. They are inhabited by shopkeepers who expose their wares in the same narrow and dark shops used by their ancestors three centuries ago. I was indebted to the landlady of my hotel for an introduction to the proprietor of the most perfect and curious of these houses, into which however I obtained admission with very great difficulty. It belongs to a lady whose social condition and calling are announced over the door by the words, “*Veuve Perron, Marchande des Draps.*” My landlady warned me that Madame Perron was a very crotchety person, and that it was very probable she would not allow me inside her house, as, since an admiring artist had recently cut and carried off the heads of five bishops, carved in oak, which had surmounted her stairs, she regarded all sketchers with particular aversion, and seldom admitted one within her doors. Unwilling however to abandon the attempt, I presented my billet to the *Veuve*, whom I found sitting at the receipt of custom. Her character had not been exaggerated. Surveying me from head to foot, and taking particular notice of my sketch-book, she almost screamed out, “So you too want to draw my

house!" I assured her that I had no intention to do anything of the sort, knowing well that however anxious I might be to possess a drawing of it, the details were far too elaborate for my pencil. She would never allow any one to draw in her house again; for "un vilain artiste a volé les têtes de mes cinq évêques; et ils étaient magnifiques!" and then she descanted on her kindness in having furnished the wretch with a table and chair that he might draw more at his ease, and even allowed him to hang a cloth before the window, there being, as he said, *too much light*. The old lady was certainly to be pitied. She loved her ancient home, was proud of its rich adornments and cunning carvings, and took great pleasure in showing them to the stranger; and thus had her kindness been requited! Curse on these spoilers!—spoilers of more than that which they destroy; for they spoil the pleasure of hundreds, who, by their selfish vice, are often shut out from what was before open to all.

It was, I believe, solely in consequence of my sympathy with the Veuve Perron, whose love for her beautiful house delighted me extremely, that I at last opened her heart as well as door. But not without conditions: I was to lay down my book and go in without that little tube the lead in which was apparently more dreaded by Madame Perron than a mus-

ket-ball. These being fulfilled, she led me across her shop, and throwing open a door at the back of it, I stood within a hall which was literally panelled from floor to roof with rich sculptures. The lofty chimney-piece was a marvel of workmanship, only surpassed by the stairs, upon which the sculptors seemed to have bestowed their greatest skill. Elaborately carved figures adorned the sides and surmounted the balustrades, among which I observed the headless bishops. But the entire house was full of carving: a Wardour-street dealer might store a shop with the contents. There were, as I was informed, as highly ornamented houses in Morlaix as this, before the so-called improvements were commenced; but now it stands alone, a marvel of the great pains taken in olden times to make dwellings lovely to the eye, instead of being, as they now are, tasteless, if not actually hideous.

Let not the tourist who visits Morlaix fail to see the interior of this house; but if he be an artist, let him not make a parade of his craft, at least if Veuve Perron be the *Janitrix*.

These fine old houses,—now, alas! in a terrible minority in the town,—are relics of the palmy days of Morlaix, when its wealth and commerce made it famous throughout France. Charles IX. conferred a very advantageous charter upon the citizens, and permitted their chief magistrate to wear his sword at the

sittings of the States of Brittany, a privilege which was only accorded to the representatives of the principal cities of France.

The flourishing condition of the town excited the cupidity of the English when at war with Brittany, and they sacked it in 1522. Availing themselves of the absence of the chief magistrate and leading citizens, who had gone to a *fête* at Guingamp, they entered the town at night, and after pillaging it committed frightful atrocities on the defenceless inhabitants. When the intelligence of these dreadful deeds reached Guingamp, the absent Morlaisians hastened home, and, rallying round them as many of their townsmen as could be armed, pursued the English in hot haste. The majority of these, with several prisoners and much rich booty, succeeded in regaining their ships, which were lying at the mouth of the river ; but between six and seven hundred were overtaken near a fountain, about a league from the town, and put to the sword. The locality of this well-merited reprisal is still shown, and the spring bears the name of *Feunteun ar Saozon*, or the Saxons' Fountain.

No wonder, bearing in mind how frequently the coasts and towns of Brittany were ravaged by the English during the long and fierce war between the two countries, that the Saxons, as the latter were called, should have remained an object of hatred to

the Breton; and even to this day the Léonard peasant who inhabits the Léonais district round Morlaix is noted for his unfriendly feeling towards England. But it must also be remembered that he leads a very secluded life, and that while civilization and refinement have long since invaded Morlaix, the neighbouring rustic lives amidst the customs and in the belief of his forefathers.

Morlaix is admirably situated for commerce, and the bustling quays show that advantage is taken of its situation. A large steamer maintains a communication with Hâvre, and through that town supplies Paris with a vast quantity of fruit grown on the slopes of the neighbouring hills.

I was startled the day after my arrival by hearing English spoken in the hall of my hotel. It proceeded from three young countrymen, who had crossed from Jersey in a trading cutter to a small town on the coast, and after making a short tour had established themselves at Morlaix, for the sake of the excellent sporting which the surrounding country affords. I am led to mention this rencontre, as it was the only occasion of my meeting English tourists during my wanderings in Brittany.

'One of the gentlemen had a very fine English pointer, which gave him a world of trouble, as nothing could reconcile the animal to France, Frenchmen, or French

dogs. When about sixty miles from the small port at which he had been landed, he lost his master, and, as was afterwards ascertained, crossed the country nearly in a straight line to the place of his disembarkation, where he remained in great grief until reclaimed.

The police regulations in France require all dogs to be muzzled or led by a chain during the summer months, in default of which they are either killed immediately or confined for twenty-four hours in a pound, and, if not claimed at the expiration of that time, strangled without mercy. English dogs, like their masters, enjoy greater liberty than is accorded to their brethren in France ; and if the canine quadrupeds reason at all, they must, like the anti-Gallican pointer, have a great aversion to a country where their jaws are tied up.

The ancient churches at Morlaix seem to have shared the fate of the old houses. Tradition speaks of two large and handsome edifices, but now the church of St. Melaine is alone worth notice, and more for its porch, which is certainly very beautiful, than for any other part of the building. While admiring this, I observed a notice on the door to the effect that a prayer offered daily to St. Michael for one month, accompanied by confession and oblation to the Saint, would obtain remission of sins and indulgence for one hundred days. The attention of soldiers

and sailors who were going to fight their country's battles was particularly called to these promised advantages, and the prayer to be said was of no memory-burdening length. It ran thus:—"St. Michel, Archange, défendez-nous dans le combat, afin que nous ne périssons pas au jour terrible du jugement."

There are several pleasing excursions to be made round Morlaix, which will afford abundant employment to the landscape-sketcher.

The distance between this town and St. Pol de Léon is only twelve miles; and yet such is the hilly nature of the country that we were three hours *en route*; but indeed I walked more than half the distance, and was repaid by a succession of lovely views. St. Pol de Léon is situated near the head of one of the innumerable creeks which indent the coast of Brittany, and, though within sight of the sea, has none of the advantages of a port. In fact, the town is only indebted to its reputed sanctity for existence, and is at all other seasons but those devoted to religious *fêtes* as dull a place as can be well conceived. But it possesses two churches,—one a cathedral, of rare magnificence, well deserving the trouble of a special journey from Morlaix, or even from a more distant place, for the purpose of seeing them.

St. Pol de Léon is one of the numerous towns in Brittany whose early history is a stumbling-block to

archæologists; for any attempt to trace its origin leads the inquirer into remote ages where, amid gleams of truth, he is lost in the gloom and obscurity of ancient traditions and legendary myths.

Monastic records state that the "holy city," as Bretons still love to call this town, derives its name from Saint Pol, an Englishman who lived in the fifth century, and left his conventional home in Winchester to carry the light of Christianity into Brittany.* After many wanderings, he founded the town bearing his name, and, according to the said monkish chronicles, performed so many miracles that his fame became noised abroad, and drew thousands to the home of his adoption. It was early erected into an episcopal see, and enjoyed an uninterrupted succession of Bishops for a very long period, until the great Revolution terminated their existence, with that of the numerous ecclesiastical establishments which had sprung up and flourished in the holy sunshine of St. Pol.

The first cathedral was built by the Breton King Conan Mériaud. According to tradition, it was a

* The desolation of Britain which followed the destructive conquest of the Saxons was favourable to the progress of civilization and Christianity in Armorica. Gibbon says, "After the destruction of the principal churches in Britain, the Bishops who had declined the crown of martyrdom retired, with their holy relics, into Wales and Armorica."—*Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. vi. p. 388.

strong and large wooden edifice, which endured five centuries, at the expiration of which time it was destroyed by the Normans, who replaced it by a stone church. But this was not destined to last long, and in its turn gave place to the cathedral which we now see.

It is remarkable that history is entirely silent respecting the date of the present building, but authorities are pretty well agreed that it is not older than the commencement of the fourteenth century. This is partly confirmed by the discovery, during recent restorations, of a number of coins of the Breton Dukes of this period, which were found in the foundations of one of the towers. Though not ranking among first-class cathedrals, the edifice is of enormous size, —a very giant among the small houses around it. The form is singularly regular, and though the architecture is, generally speaking, heavy, the interior is striking from its solemn grandeur and simplicity. The windows were formerly filled with magnificent stained glass ; the lovely Rose, once

“Flamboyant with a thousand gorgeous colours,
The perfect flower of Gothic loveliness,”

and the Pentalpha, are widowed of their brilliant gems ; and indeed nearly the whole of the painted crystal perished in the revolutionary storm. A large marble slab before the high altar marks the resting-place of St. Pol, who died in 594 ; but the tomb, as

well as that of King Conan, who was buried near the Saint, were despoiled at the Revolution. It is remarkable that the rich and beautiful carvings in the choir should have escaped the general destruction which overtook so many ecclesiastical works at this period, and still more extraordinary that the skulls of many of the Bishops should be still preserved. They must have been removed to safer places than those which they now occupy, otherwise they would assuredly have been destroyed; for, as is well known, neither living or dead Bishops were in favour with the Revolutionists.

Most curious indeed are these skull-coffins. They are ranged on the ledges and cornices of the altars in the small chapels around the church. The first that I saw bore this inscription:—

CI GIT
LE CHEF
DE MONSIEUR —
62^{me} EVEQUE DE ST. LÉON.

Other boxes contain the skulls of earlier Prelates. Fancy beholding the skull of Becket in the cathedral of Canterbury, or Latimer in that of Worcester! And how would a future phrenologist—if such a being should indeed exist—rejoice in being able to scrutinize the bumps of a Philpotts in the cathedral at Exeter, or those of a Whately in that of St. Patrick's!

The chief curiosity in the Cathedral of St. Pol is a long stone trough, much like a sarcophagus, situated in the transept, and which is supposed to have contained the body of King Conan. The workmanship is extremely rude, and there is strong probability that it is a relic of the primitive church, and was used in the first instance for baptism by immersion : this was the practice of the early Christians in Brittany, and the relic in question has every appearance of great antiquity. Not far from this trough is a curious triple head, also very old, inscribed, "*Ma Douaz*," My God. This emblem of the Trinity in Unity deserves special attention ; for, as Frémenville remarks, "C'est une symbole d'une religion trinitaire, appartenant non-seulement au Christianisme, mais à des religions infiniment plus anciennes, desquelles les Chrétiens l'ont emprunté."

The pavement of the nave and choir is a perfect mosaic of tombstones, many of which formerly displayed armorial bearings in rich brass and other metals. It is supposed that an extensive crypt exists under the choir, and contains a great number of curious monuments and tombs. The entrance, which is immediately behind the altar, has been blocked up since the Revolution : it is purposed however to open it soon, and explore the interior. Such are the principal curiosities of this fine church ; but the lover of

old carvings will find many details of great interest on the altars of the chapels.

Next to the cathedral, the church bearing the strange name of Creisker, from its situation in the centre of the town (Creisker being the Breton for *middle* or *centre*), is the most remarkable. And indeed, as a specimen of florid Gothic architecture, it far surpasses the cathedral in beauty.

It stands on the site of a chapel erected to commemorate a miracle performed by St. Kirech, another worthy of great miracle-working renown. When the chapel became ruinous (by the way, St. Kirech should have prevented this, if only to testify his gratitude for the respect shown to his memory by its erection), the great Duke of Brittany, Jean IV., built the present church, sparing no expense to make it—what indeed it is—a magnificent monument of his munificence and of the glorious majesty of Gothic architecture. There is a tradition that the architect, whose name is unknown, was an Englishman. Would that we had such architects now! then indeed there would be no necessity, as an eminent living writer suggests, to hang some half-dozen of the fraternity as a terror to some of the craft, who perpetrate such abominations as disfigure our land.

But, although the body of the church is rich in Gothic ornament, it is on the spire that the architect

has exhausted, or rather displayed, his greatest skill. It rises to the dizzy height of 393 feet, springing from four pillars at the intersection of the transepts, nave, and choir, and is composed entirely of granite. No beam, iron brace, or girder is used; and it is open from the top to within eighty feet of the bottom. Standing within it at this altitude, you look up the tapering interior, the whole of which is rendered perfectly visible by openings in the sides. Truly Vauban used no hyperbole when he called it a unique architectural *tour de force*, for it is without a rival in boldness, and at the same time lightness of construction. The granite of which it is built is cut into slabs, disposed like tiles, diminishing in size as they approach the top. You must ascend to the gallery running round the summit of the tower from whence the spire springs, to be fully impressed by this wonder of architecture. Exquisite small and slender *tourelles* rise from the four corners, each a Gothic gem of cunning workmanship. It is satisfactory to know that this beautiful church has been included among the *Monumens Historiques* of France, and will henceforth be kept in repair by the Government.

The ancient ecclesiastical character of St. Pol is well seen from the gallery of this church. Almost all the buildings of any pretensions were, or are, convents, monasteries, or churches: for, although the

colonies of monks or nuns, who used to live in the town and neighbourhood, were driven from their peaceful homes at the Revolution, two or three monastic institutions remain. Among these is a large nunnery, close to the Creisker ; the occupants of this vast building never pass beyond the walls ; their communion with nature being limited to a large and very beautiful garden, glowing with lovely flowers, among which I observed the dark sisters walking. But among the numerous ecclesiastical establishments in St. Pol, none so strikingly attests its fallen estate as the once-proud Bishop's palace and gardens, now converted into a Gendarmerie and prison. The view beyond St. Pol, to the north, embraces a vast extent of land and sea, including a long reach of wild and rugged coast, fringed by rocky islands.

I devoted the afternoon to an excursion to one of these, called Batz, which lies opposite Roscoff, a small port three miles from St. Pol. The sanctity of St. Pol seems to have had strong influence over the surrounding country. In no other way can we account for the magnificent church at Roscoff, with the curious neighbouring ossuary, and the large convents near the town. Wonderful legends attach to the church, some of which are chronicled in strange stone sculptures ; among these are basso-relievos of ships saved from destruction by the strong arm of

St. Pol, and of the sick and lame cured. The interior of the building is full of votive offerings, principally deposited by sailors, or, as report goes, by smugglers; for Roscoff, situated as it is at the end of the world, has long been famous for its commerce unfettered by custom-house regulations. The town is historically interesting, from the circumstance of Mary, Queen of Scots, having landed there during a storm, on which occasion she founded a chapel, the ruins of which are still visible. It is curious that, while Roscoff sheltered Scotland's unhappy Queen, the neighbouring island should have received the young Pretender, who landed on it after his adventurous escape from Scotland.

Batz, which is about twenty minutes' sail from the coast, is inhabited by an amphibious population, who divide their time between fishing and agriculture. Many varieties of fish are caught round the island, and the naturally barren and unfruitful soil is rendered productive by seaweed manure, which is very abundant. When midway between Batz and Roscoff I was tempted by the delicious purity of the water to cast off my clothes and plunge into the sea, but it was well that a boat was at hand, for the tide was ebbing so strong and fast, that, although I am a good swimmer, I do not think I should have been able to reach the shore unassisted.

Among the “lions” of this part of the country is a wonderful fig-tree, in the garden of a convent near Roscoff. It was planted by a monk about eighty years ago, and now covers an area 380 feet in circumference. The numerous branches are propped by four walls and sixty-eight stone pillars, and they are only prevented spreading over the entire garden by being pruned. The tree was loaded with figs at the time of my visit, and I was informed that it has never been known to fail producing fruit. Looking at the sheltering nature of this vegetable monster, the beauty and propriety of the description in Scripture, representing the people of Judea and Israel dwelling under their vines and fig-trees, is very apparent.

About two miles from St. Pol, I visited some Druidical remains in a field near the road ; they consist of four dolmens in excellent preservation ; the largest horizontal stone is fourteen feet nine inches long, and nine feet four inches broad. The surface is adapted to receive the head and body of a human victim, and the channels, supposed to have been made for carrying off the blood, may still be traced. There are other Druidical remains in the vicinity, but the tourist who purposes visiting Carnac need not go out of his way to see them. Indeed all the coast to the east and west of Roscoff bears traces of having been

occupied by Druids, who evidently delighted in this savage and barren part of Brittany.

On my return to St. Pol I found the market-place filled with peasants,—wild-looking fellows, with uncombed shaggy locks and broad-brimmed hats. They were waiting to be hired as threshers, for which hard labour they consider themselves well paid with the daily wage of twenty sous.





Notre Dame de Fol-Goët.

CHAPTER XI.

CHARACTER OF FINISTERRE.—STATE OF AGRICULTURE.—LESNEVEN.—THE KING OF LÉON.—NOTRE DAME DE FOL-GOËT.—LEGEND OF THE FOL.—JOHN OF MONTFORT'S VOW.—MAGNIFICENT CHURCH.—MIRACLES.—ROYAL PILGRIMS.—KERSANTON STONE.—RICH SCULPTURES.—THE FOOL'S CHAPEL.—THE JUBÉ.—THE FOOL'S FOUNTAIN.—KERILIEN.—ROMAN REMAINS.—DRIVE TO BREST.

THE wild nature of Finisterre is very apparent in driving from St. Pol to Brest. Large tracts of heath and broom fill the landscape, sprinkled by small villages and poor farmhouses, whose occupants, with their primitive husbandry, seem to have a hard struggle to win a subsistence from the ground.

Here, as elsewhere, I witnessed the sad improvi-

denee of threshing the corn on the road as soon as it is reaped, a practice unfortunately universal in Brittany, for granaries form no part of a Breton home-stead.

The agriculture of this district has certainly not altered since Arthur Young's day, who thus wrote when journeying to Brest:—"One-third of what I have seen of this part of the province seems uncultivated and nearly all in misery. What have kings and ministers, and parliaments, and states, to answer for their prejudices, seeing millions of hands, that would be industrious, idle and starving through the execrable maxims of despotism and the equally detestable prejudices of a feudal nobility!"*

This was written when the Seigneurs of Brittany went about with their swords at their sides and ruled the country. But the condition of things is a striking instance of the truth of the lines—

" How small, of all that human hearts endure,
That part which laws or kings can cause or cure!"

For since Young travelled, France has had the benefit of great constitutional experience,—now madly rejoicing in Republicanism, and now sighing beneath despotism; and yet Brittany remains wedded to her old ways, and Young's words, "husbandry is not much

* Travels in France.

further advanced in Bretagne, at least in skill, than among the Hurons," holds good now. If the Bretons would act upon the noble French proverb, "Aide-toi, et le ciel t'aidera," we should soon see their beautiful country teeming with agricultural prosperity.

You will be much surprised, amidst such unpromising natural features and excessive poverty, to see splendid churches in every small hamlet, and rich crosses by the wayside. I counted thirty-eight of the latter between St. Pol and Lesneven, a distance of twenty-two miles, many covered with figures and elaborate sculptures, which have suffered no injury beyond that inflicted by Time's gnawing tooth.

Lesneven is a dull town, only interesting for its great antiquity, as it certainly existed in the sixth century, and was the habitual residence of a King of Léon, surnamed Even, famous for his courage and success in war. The town is indebted to him for its name, as the word Lesneven is a contraction of Lès-an-Even, meaning, in Breton, the Court of Even. But the dullness of Lesneven is in a great manner compensated for by an architectural gem of rare beauty within a mile of the town, which the tourist should on no account miss seeing ; this is the church of Notre Dame de Fol-Goet, situated on the verge of a wild heath. Its existence and singularly isolated position—for there is only a small hamlet near it—are

due to the belief entertained by John IV., Duke of Brittany, in a very curious legend. There are two or three versions of the story, but that written on vellum and suspended under the pulpit in the church must be regarded as the most authentic. Divested of much tedious verbiage it runs thus:—About the year 1300 there lived on the site now occupied by the church a half-witted lad who was known by no other name than “Salaün ar Fol-Goet,” Salaün the Fool of the Wood. He spent his life in a wood near a fountain, only frequenting the haunts of men when impelled by hunger to seek food. Then he went to Lesneven, and cried through the streets, “Oh ! oh ! oh ! oh ! *Ave Maria ! Salaün a zebré bara,*” which means, ‘Give Salaün a piece of bread.’ This prayer was always granted, and, provided with a sufficient supply of bread for some days, he would return to his wood, dip his bread in water, and so satisfy his wants. Thus he lived ; and although many attempts were made to enlarge his vocabulary, he was never known to say aught beyond the foregoing words. When cold (for his raiment consisted only of a few rags, which he preferred to substantial clothes) he was in the habit of climbing a tree and swinging himself violently in the branches, crying perpetually, “ Oh ! oh ! oh ! oh ! *Ave Maria !*” Then, when he became warm, he plunged into the neighbouring spring, and after cooling his

body, coiled himself up at the foot of a tree and went to sleep. At length, murmuring the name of Maria, he died, and, being esteemed by the peasants in the neighbourhood no better than a brute beast, was buried like a dog in the ground near the fountain.

But the blessed Virgin Mary, desirous that one who had lauded her so fervently and constantly on earth should be among the elect in heaven, interceded for the poor fool at the gates of Paradise, gained him admission into the company of saints, and, to show the world her power, caused a superb lily to spring in the depth of winter from Salaün's grave, bearing a profusion of flowers, on the leaves of which were the words in letters of gold, "Ave Maria! Ave Maria!" The miracle, coming to the ears of the great John of Montfort, who was warring at the time with Charles de Blois for the Dukedom of Brittany, led him to make a vow, that if it pleased God to give him the victory in the impending battle of Auray, he would build a church over the fool's grave; and, unlike many Princes who have made vows of the same nature and broken them, he fulfilled his promise by erecting the glorious fabric which we now see. But he did more: he endowed the church with liberal revenues; and his successor, John V., built a large collegiate establishment adjoining the church, for the habitation of priests.

Such are the leading features of the legend of Notre Dame de Fol-Goet; and lest any doubt should be felt by the reader in the truth of the statement, this authentication is appended to the document : “ Nous Jean Guillaume, prêtre en la Sacrée Faculté de Théologie à Paris, Vicaire Général de Monseigneur l’Évêque de Saint-Pol de Léon, certifions avoir ven les Bulles et Documens, et qu’ils sont vrais. Donné à St. Paul le 22 Août, 1633.” Who, with such an indorsement as this, can doubt the truthfulness of the legend? Surely none but disbelieving and heretical Protestants!

In confirmation of the part taken by the Dukes of Brittany in the affair, there was to be seen, a few years ago, a very fine sculpture over the south porch, representing John of Montfort meekly kneeling upon his knees, clad in armour, offering his sword to the Virgin ; and this inscription, though much mutilated, may still be deciphered over the principal entrance : “ Johan. V., Illustrissimus Dux Britonum, fundavit præsens collegium anno 1423.”

These princely recognitions of the miraculous powers of the Virgin were speedily rewarded by the Church. Pope Julian III. published a Bull declaring that a miracle had been wrought on the site of the poor fool’s grave, and that consequently the ground and fountain were holy. His Holiness moreover declared

that all persons making a pilgrimage to the church of Notre Dame de Fol-Goet at the times and seasons appointed by the Vatican for visiting St. Peter's at Rome should obtain the same indulgences as those accorded to the Roman pilgrims. This Bull was confirmed by Pope Urban V., with the additional rare and valuable privilege that every mass heard at Fol-Goet liberated a soul from Purgatory.

Miracles now followed in rapid succession. The holy fountain was declared to be endowed with wonderful curative properties ; and one of the most popular Breton ballads relates how a beautiful girl, having been falsely accused of murder and sent to execution, was taken under the protection of the Lady of Fol-Goet, who rendered every attempt to kill her abortive.

No wonder, when so many spiritual and physical benefits were to be obtained, that Notre Dame de Fol-Goet was soon frequented by thousands of pilgrims ! Kings and princes were among the throng who received hospitality in the neighbouring buildings devoted to the priests ; and the money-box of the sainted fool was replete with the oblations of the faithful. For many centuries the church was in high favour, and all went well with the priests of Fol-Goet. But at last came the Revolution ; and even the beautiful church, with its romantic legend, found no mercy from the infuriated mob. We might pause to

express our surprise to devout Roman Catholics, that the lady who, by their account, had power with the Almighty to make the lily unfold its loveliness in the depth of winter, did not stay the hand of the spoiler. Suffice to say that she did not; and the glorious church, with its numerous statues, finials, foliaged *chevrons*, and grotesque pipe-heads, was sadly defaced. The tower, which is nearly as fine as that surmounting the Creisker at St. Pol, escaped the nearly general destruction, but the adjoining buildings were reduced to the picturesque ruins which we now see. The church would doubtless have suffered more but for the circumstance that all the sculptures are of Ker-santon stone, an extremely hard substance, composed of hornblende, in which magnetic oxide of iron is pretty largely distributed. After long exposure to the air it assumes a dark green hue, which gives it the appearance of bronze.

Besides the west portal, which is coeval with the church, another and far more beautiful entrance exists on the south side. This was built by Anne of Brittany. It is covered by the most exquisite sculptures. Various kinds of foliage, imitated with wonderful fidelity, wreath the mouldings, among which a variety of animals are seen playing; and other portions are decorated by rich initial letters and armorial bearings of the Dukes of Brittany, with their motto—*Melius*

mori quam fædari. This porch deserves minute examination: every leaf is a study; and it will be seen that the artist has bestowed as much pains on the back part of his work as on the front.

The figures—which, alas! are now few in number and sadly mutilated—show an equal amount of care in their execution. They have the peculiarity of representing well-known saints, as St. Joseph and St. John, in Breton costume. Among these is a lovely fragment of a statue, emblematic of Faith, with the inscription, “*Fides optima in Deo est,*”—unavailing, alas! to avert the sacrilegious fury of the Revolutionists. It is hopeless to expect a lawless mob to feel that—

“A thing of beauty is a joy for ever:”

and yet it would be wise to educate the lower orders to respect the great architectural works of our fore-fathers. Well has a deep lover of these heir-looms said, “We have no right whatever to touch them: they are not ours; they belong partly to those who built them, and partly to all the generations of mankind who are to follow us. It may hereafter be a subject of sorrow or a cause of injury to millions, that we have consulted our present convenience by casting down such buildings. That sorrow, that loss we have no right to inflict. Did the cathedral of Avranches belong to the mob who destroyed it any

more than it did to us who walk in sorrow to and fro over its foundation ? Neither does any building whatever belong to those mobs who do violence to it.”*

A little to the right of the principal entrance is the Fool's Chapel, which is unfortunately in a very dilapidated state. The legend of his life and death may however still be seen on the walls. A fresco-painting represents the leading features of the story ; the last scene displays a gigantic lily sprouting from his mouth as he lies in his grave, with the words *Ave Maria* on the leaves. Near the chapel is a very curious coffer, partly embedded in the ground, clamped with massive iron bands, and having the lid secured by ponderous and quaint padlocks. This is Salaün's money-box, now, alas ! a world too wide for the slender oblations which it receives. It is well that the church has not to depend on these for support. Government has recently included this building in the list of *Monumens Historiques*, and already reparations have been made to the amount of 30,000 francs. Six chairs are chained to the money-box,—for what purpose, unless to remind their occupiers not to forget poor Salaün, I cannot divine.

Beautiful, most beautiful, is the sculpture throughout the interior, but it is upon the Jubé, or Rood-loft, that the greatest pains have been bestowed. This

* Ruskin's ‘Seven Lamps of Architecture,’ p. 181.

is, singular to say, extremely perfect, and displays a bewildering variety of detail. The high, and two adjoining altars are also very elaborately wrought, the fronts being covered by tracery of lace-like texture. In the south-east corner of the choir, under a canopy, are statues in stone of John of Montfort and his heroic Duchess, whose history forms one of the most thrilling chapters in Froissart's Chronicle.

The Duke is represented in his crown and ducal robes, bearing the sceptre in his right hand and a missal in his left ; the Duchess also wears her state-dress and crown, and, like her husband, carries a missal in her left hand, while her right, emblematic of her heroism, rests upon a sword. Both statues were painted and richly gilt ; the workmanship is admirable, and the costume and ornaments most carefully executed.

These figures, which escaped total destruction, though not injury, by being concealed during the Revolution, are exceedingly interesting ; they give a reality to the legendary history of the place, and add greatly to its charm. I sat down to sketch the stately effigies ; there was but one person in the church, an ancient man, attired in the old Breton trunk-hose, who knelt before an altar, and who,

“ With amber beard and flaxen hair,
And reverend apostolic air,”

was in happy keeping with the scene. As I progressed

with my work, and became familiar with the stone faces of the mighty Duke and his courageous and faithful wife, the present grew dim, and I seemed swept into the past, when the building in which I sat was filled with believing nobles and their retinues, who came from afar to worship at the shrine of the Lady of Fol-Goet.

Immediately behind the east end of the church is the Fool's Fountain, still flowing clear, fresh, and beautiful, giving birth to a brook which seems to say—

“I chatter, chatter as I flow
To join the brimming river ;
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.”

The water issues from a large stone reservoir, in which I observed three fish. A door behind the high altar communicates with the fountain. Formerly it was customary to immerse clothes in the water, and to make them additionally holy by blessing them at the high altar. This practice has nearly ceased ; but peasants still come from very distant parts of the country to dip the garments of the sick in the pure spring, and to fill vessels with the precious fluid.

After sketching the church and college buildings, I drove to the hamlet of Kerilien, the site, according to many antiquaries, of the ancient *oppidum* of the Osismii. The discovery of numerous Roman remains,

comprising coins, bronze instruments, tiles with the bend or hook (*tegulae hamatæ*) peculiar to those made by the Romans, goes far to prove that Kerilien was the site of a Roman town.

As I drew near Brest I seemed to be leaving Brittany. Numerous *guinguettes*, like those near Paris, alternating with modern and very ugly villas, lined the road. The drinking-houses were full of sailors, who gave evidence of the intoxicating nature of the liquor they had patronized by shouting uproariously, while others were describing tacking motions on the road. Everything betokened the presence of a large city, and I felt that I had indeed passed out of Brittany when I came to rest in the Hôtel du Grand Monarque within the walls of Brest.





Abbey of St. Mathieu.

CHAPTER XII.

ORIGIN OF BREST.—HELD BY THE ENGLISH.—CARDINAL RICHELIEU.—COLBERT.—THE CASTLE.—VAUBAN'S FORTIFICATIONS.—THE DUNGEONS.—THE ARSENAL.—HOW TO SEE IT.—MAGNIFICENT VIEW.—THE HARBOUR.—SAILORS' BARRACKS.—THE BAGNES.—EXCURSION TO POINT ST. MATHIEU.—ST. RENAN.—A BRETON BREAKFAST.—LARGE MENHIR.—HOLY CEMETERY.—THE STONE LOAVES.—CURIOS SUPERSTITION.—THE FIELD OF GRIEF.—LE CONQUET.—ABBEY OF ST. MATHIEU.—ST. TANGUY.—THE CHANNEL DU FOUR.—THE DREADED ISLES.—LIGHTHOUSE.—LO-CHRIST.—THE LAST MISSIONARY.—RETURN TO BREST.

No ; Brest is not Brittany. Such was my impression when I entered it, confirmed by a sojourn there of some days. Yet the tourist must not leave it out of his itinerary ; for besides its interest as a first-class naval fortress (its glory, by the way, is somewhat

dimmed now by Cherbourg), it has features well worth seeing.

Some antiquaries are desirous of identifying Brest with the *Portus Brivates* of the ancients, but there is much more reason to believe that its name is derived from Bristok, a Celtic chief of Léon, who founded the town. This however only rests on legendary authority, as there is no historical mention of the place or castle prior to 1240. During the three succeeding centuries the latter sustained fierce sieges, as Brest became an object of great importance to parties contending for the sovereignty of Brittany.

The English held it for a long time, and only retired on receiving a large sum of money. It was not however until 1631 that Brest occupied the rank of a chief city. At that date the far-sighted Richelieu, who was the originator of the French navy, seeing that the site was eminently adapted for a great naval port, caused ten ships of the line and six frigates to be built, and erected at the same time the necessary buildings for an arsenal. Colbert, of whom Louis the Great said, “En me donnant Colbert, le ciel m'a tout donné,” added to these; old buildings gave place to new, and in a few years there was scarcely an ancient house left standing. The town, which is built on the left bank of the river Penfeld, is crowned by the castle, a grand old structure, which

was frequently occupied by the Dukes of Brittany. The best view is obtained from the water just opposite the entrance to the port, from whence the noble and very lofty towers assume a majestic appearance. Vauban's master-hand is visible throughout the structure, which he fortified in the strongest possible manner; and though stone walls seem now to be somewhat out of fashion as efficient defences, yet I apprehend it would prove a difficult task to take the castle of Brest. Besides the main building, which is in the form of a trapezium, and contains a large garrison, there are six massive flanking towers. The largest, commanding the port and harbour, is called the "Tour des Anglais," in memory of the successful defence by the English. The *souterrains* of this vast castle are of enormous and unknown extent; numerous passages are blocked, leading to dungeons and *oubliettes* below those at present accessible. The visitor, who is curious in these matters, will be shown many dismal holes where unfortunate prisoners were confined in the days when mercy rarely tempered justice. On the walls of a dungeon are the words, "Post tenebras spero lucem," carved by some poor wretch who may have been cheered by the certainty that if not in this world, then in that to come, darkness will be succeeded by light to those who have borne severe trials with Christian resignation.

The ground on which Brest is built rises so precipitously from the water that some of the streets are almost impassable for vehicles. Immediately opposite stands the suburb of Récouvrance, so called from a chapel dedicated to Notre Dame de Récouvrance, in which it has long been customary to deposit *ex voto* offerings for the safe return of ships sailing from Brest. The dockyard and arsenal are situated on the banks of the creek. Being assured by various parties that personal application to the Major de la Marine to see these establishments would be attended with success, I called on the great man, whom I found in his office in full uniform. He received me very courteously, but said (what indeed I apprehended) that he had no power to grant the permission I requested ; but that if I brought him a letter from the Préfet, sanctioning my admittance into the arsenal, he would at once give me the necessary order. Accordingly I went to the Préfecture, a handsome modern building ; saw the Préfet, a naval officer of high rank, who was also in uniform (all Government offices in Brest are filled by naval men, who are obliged to wear their uniforms at their desks), and learned from him that his instructions peremptorily forbade the dockyard being shown to foreigners without an order from the Minister of Marine in Paris. He greatly regretted the stringency of this regulation, particularly at the

present time, when so pleasant an *entente cordiale* existed between France and England ; *mais*—and here he gave his shoulders a convulsive shrug peculiar to Frenchmen—he could not help it ; and, after a succession of bows, I left the room. The English Consul, to whom I had a letter of introduction, confirmed the Préfet's words ; but considerably lessened my disappointment by assuring me that the dockyard was not worth seeing by any one familiar with our great naval ports ; but that if I was disposed to see it, I could gratify my curiosity perfectly well by ascending to the summit of the church-tower, which commands every part of the arsenal.

Having long been in the habit in my wanderings of following Virgil's advice—

“ Jamque ascendebat collem, qui plurimus urbi
Imminet, adversaque aspectat desuper arces,”

I acted on the Consul's suggestion, and after a long and arduous climb—for the stone stairs only extend halfway up the tower, the rest of the ascent being made by means of very inconvenient wooden steps—I emerged on the narrow platform at the summit, and beheld the town, dockyard, arsenal, roadstead, and magnificent harbour, spread map-like beneath me.

Bearing in mind the renown of Brest, the extremely small extent of the dockyard compared with those at Woolwich and Portsmouth, and the little

activity observable throughout the establishment, were very striking. There are only eleven slips for building ships of war, and of these but three are covered. The nature of the ground occupied by the arsenal is opposed to the existence of large edifices, as it is confined by the water at one side, and on the other by high banks which rise almost precipitously within a few feet of the shore, leaving only a narrow ledge for war-purposes.

But the glory of Brest is the roadstead, in which five hundred ships-of-the-line can ride in perfect security during the fiercest gales. At the time of my visit there was only one ship at anchor, the '*Bretagne*,' the largest ship in the French navy, carrying 140 guns and 1500 men. The harbour extends like a vast inland sea beyond the roadstead: the entrance consists of a narrow strait called the Goulet, divided by a chain of rocks, which obliges all ships entering the harbour to pass immediately under a range of batteries at the mouth.

The sailors' barracks—a peculiar feature in France—which crown the hill above Réconvrance, are a magnificent pile of buildings capable of containing 20,000 men. They were tenanted by about 5000 remarkably smart fellows, mostly natives, for Bretons have always formed a large proportion of the French navy. Those I saw would however do greater credit

to themselves and their country if they restrained their drinking propensities within the bounds of sobriety. It was very distressing on Sunday evening to see scores of sailors reeling through the streets, shouting and singing in Jack Tar fashion ; and I was surprised to hear that they are only punished when found drunk within their quarters.

Adjoining the arsenal may be seen a vast building of considerable architectural pretensions, to which the Englishman is admitted by merely showing his passport, and entering his name in a book. This is the famous Bagne, or prison, to which the worst description of criminals are consigned. Though I was prepared for a painful exhibition, the reality was blacker than the anticipated picture. Having complied with the required formalities, I was conducted by a *Garde* through extensive passages into a hall about three hundred feet long and fifty broad, furnished with a great number of sloping wooden platforms, about four feet apart, and so disposed as to allow free passage round the room. These form the beds of the convicts, who at night, and when not at work in the dockyard, are secured to them. Those under the heaviest sentences are also chained in pairs. They are attired in a loose red serge coat and yellow trousers. When I entered the hall they had just been chained to the platforms, and those I saw, with few

exceptions, possessed physiognomies of the most forbidding nature. To intimidate and suppress revolt, cannon loaded with grape are placed at the ends of the room, and so adjusted as to sweep the entire apartment. Talking is strictly forbidden ; and during the periods of labour, which are extremely long, the prisoners are overlooked by hard taskmasters, who compel them to work without any relaxation. It would be difficult to imagine a greater contrast than that between this prison-house and one of our modern penitentiaries, where the object seems to be to make the prisoner as comfortable as possible. When I had made a tour of the room, my guide informed me that there were three more halls like the one I had seen, adding, that he would conduct me through them if I pleased. I had however seen quite enough, and many hours elapsed before my mental vision of fierce passions chafing in chains became dim. At the time of my visit, the Bagnes contained about four thousand prisoners, but there is chain-accommodation for double that number.

Few towns can boast of so fine a public promenade as Brest ; it consists of a long and spacious avenue of noble trees, with side-walks, from whence extensive views of the harbour may be obtained. The pleasure of a promenade is however sadly marred by the perpetual drilling of raw recruits, who occupy the walks.

The rough treatment to which these awkward squads are subjected, must give them rather a dreary prospect of army discipline. Besides being rudely cuffed and pushed, the drill-sergeants render their commands more impressive by administering repeated kicks, which, judging by their violence, must make a very lasting impression on the persons of the recruits, if not on their memory.

Having now seen the most notable sights in Brest, I was at liberty to depart, but before turning my face southwards I made a pilgrimage to the Point St. Mathieu, the Land's-End of France. This requires a long day, as the distance from Brest to the Point, by the high-road, is about twenty-two miles : the distance may be curtailed by crossing to Récouvrance, and pursuing a road parallel to the coast ; but besides being desirous to see St. Renan, I was advised that the coast-road, though nominally the shortest, being very bad, is, like many short cuts, really the longest way.

I left Brest about six in the morning,—an early hour, but, as events proved, hardly early enough for the day's work. On passing the city gates, I met a stream of peasants coming to town with market produce, mostly women mounted on sturdy though small horses, which were nearly masked by the heaps of vegetables slung on their backs.

The country between Brest and St. Renan is very

lovely, presenting a succession of wooded hills and valleys. I halted at St. Renan to breakfast; the inn wore an unpromising exterior, but the bustling landlady seemed so much surprised by my question whether breakfast was procurable, that I felt certain the *cuisine* would put forth all its strength on the occasion; nor was I wrong; the meal, which was served by the hostess, consisted of excellent beef-steaks, mutton cutlets, fish, eggs, fried potatoes, delicious butter, and good bread. Happily I was fully prepared to do ample justice to this good fare, to which the landlady was continually adding other dishes, until I entreated her to stop. She was evidently bent on impressing me with the fact, that the 'Cigogne' could furnish a breakfast to a hungry and even fastidious traveller, and was highly pleased when I assured her that her *cuisine* equalled that of the 'Grand Monarque' at Brest. It is always dangerous, before paying your bill, to praise the entertainment, as this early expression of gratification will very likely be rewarded by the charge being increased. However it is due to the good woman of the 'Cigogne' to chronicle, for the benefit of future tourists who may visit St. Renan, that the charge for my breakfast, which included very good coffee, was only a franc and a half.

I made a little *détour* to see the largest upright

Menhir in Brittany, which is about three miles from St. Renan. The road to this fine stone monument passes near the ancient Lan-Riovaré—the land of Riovaré—a small hamlet bearing the modern name of Lanniouaré, celebrated for a curious cemetery, which is esteemed so holy, that the peasants take their *sabots* off before entering its precincts. Tradition records, that beneath an irregular pavement in the centre repose the remains of 7777 saints, who were promoted to the dignity of saintship in consequence of having perished in an attempt to convert a Pagan temple into a Christian church. This drew upon them the wrath and vengeance of a legion of Heathens, by whom they were slain.

Miracles generally herd together; so here, by the side of the 7777 saints, stands a cross, with seven round stones on the pedestal; inquire what these are, and you will be told with much solemnity by the peasants, that they were formerly loaves of bread which belonged to a baker who, having harshly and thoughtlessly refused charity to the blessed St. Hervé, saw his bread forthwith converted into stone.

Nor do the wonders of this cemetery end here: near the accursed loaves may be seen the mutilated trunk of an oak-tree, once a giant in dimensions, which is regarded as having the power to protect buildings from fire. Accordingly, on the days of

Pardons, when peasants come from far and near to pray in the cemetery, they cut small pieces of wood from the miraculous trunk, and preserve them in their houses with religious care.

It would seem by these observances that the superstition of the Armoricans has descended to the modern Bretons; and indeed there is every reason to believe that in many parts of Finisterre strange superstitious practices are still observed.

The great Menhir of Kerloaz stands on a dreary moorland, with no object near it to distract attention from the impressive mass. It consists of a single granite block, thirty-seven feet nine inches high, having a quadrangular base, with a curious round protuberance on two of its sides, about three feet from the ground. Numerous conjectures have been hazarded respecting these bosses, none of which are supported by tradition. They are regarded with extraordinary veneration by the peasants. Villemarqué states that newly-married people repair to this imposing Menhir at nightfall, and divesting themselves of a portion of their clothes, the husband goes to one boss, the wife to the other, and rub their naked bodies against the stone; the man believing that by this ridiculous ceremony he will be the father of male children only, while the woman hopes that she will have dominion over her husband.

The ground surrounding this Menhir is called in Breton "*Kerglas*," which means the field of grief or mourning,—traditional evidence that the obelisk was erected as a funeral monument. In this case, as Villemarqué justly observes, the vast size of the stone denotes that the grave contained a mighty chief; for, generally speaking, the bulk of the monument raised over the bodies of chiefs was proportionate to their rank and valour in war.

In Ossian's poems, frequent mention is made of lofty grey stones over the tombs of chiefs. Thus, in Temora, alluding to the resting-place of warriors, this passage occurs :—“Our eyes are full of tears on the fields of the warrior. This stone, with all its moss, shall speak to other years.” Other passages from these poems might be cited bearing on the question of Menhirs; but as I shall have to enter upon this subject more fully, when guiding the reader over the vast plain of Carnac, I defer until then any further observations on the subject.

As the coast near Mont St. Mathieu is approached, the country becomes wilder; fields of corn give place to enclosures of broom and furze, and the trees decrease in size until at last they entirely disappear, being unable to stand against the prevailing west winds which sweep across the mighty Atlantic. Towards noon, I drew near the village of Le Conquet, the

bourn of vehicles, as the remaining distance to Point St. Mathieu must be performed on horseback or on foot. Le Conquet stands on the summit of the bold line of cliffs bounding the west coast of Brittany. Formerly it was a place of considerable importance, ranking as a town when Brest was only a village; but it was nearly destroyed by the English in 1597, only eight houses having escaped destruction. The walk from hence to the Abbey of St. Mathieu, on the extreme west coast of France, lives in my memory as one of the sunniest spots in my tour, where nearly all was sunshine; and if the reader should be tempted to follow my steps, and be as fortunate as I was with respect to the weather,—for it requires a fine day to enjoy these Atlantic-chafed cliffs,—he will, I doubt not, remember the excursion with equal pleasure. The path lies along the summit of the granite precipice, which is clothed with soft yielding sward and a profusion of wild flowers. This granite, which is extremely beautiful, in many places abounding with rose-coloured felspar, has been used for the construction of the arsenal buildings at Brest, and the quarries near Le Conquet furnished the pedestal for the obelisk of Luxor at Paris.

To the west lies the great Atlantic, whose restless waters break unceasingly against the dark rocks bristling at the base of the cliffs. Occasionally these

give place to soft sandy bays, in which the fishing-boat may be seen rocked by the swell. If you are a swimmer, take advantage of these nooks, where you may plunge into the Atlantic, apprehending no ugly sunken rocks, and after a delightful bathe proceed on your way invigorated.

The contrast between the poor dwellings on the slopes of these cliffs, and the snug farms which nestle in the hollows of our soft southern coast-wolds, is very great ; but Sussex farmers have no gales from the Atlantic to contend with.

The most western land of France, and, with the exception of Cape Finisterre in Spain, the most western point of continental Europe,* was selected by St. Tanguy, a Breton anehorite, for his home. The place had been previously occupied by Druids, who had an affection for these savage sea-cliffs, where

"The white sea-mew screamed round their mystic rites,"

and numerous remains of these people have been found on the coast. In a rocky cell, exposed to the waves and winds, St. Tanguy led a life of such extreme sanctity, that, when he died, his remains were canonized, and it was resolved to erect an abbey on the spot where he had lived. This was done ; and in

* Dunmore Head, on the west coast of Ireland, is the most western land of Europe.

the early part of the thirteenth century, the magnificent structure, to which the name of St. Mathieu was given, rose on the site of the anchorite's lonely cell, a monument of the ecclesiastical munificence of the times. The remains of the abbey yet braving the waves and winds which, during storms, lash the walls and sweep through the roofless halls, attest the original grandeur of the building. Indeed, according to history, the wealth of the monks proved more than once fatal to their fine abbey. When the English descended upon the coast in 1597, Holinshed states that they not only "put Le Conquet to the saccage, but a great abbey where our men found good booties and great store of pillage;" and although it recovered from this misfortune, and was strongly fortified, other enemies in the form of bold pirates attacked it, ungratefully returning evil for the kindness of the monks, who were in the habit of showing a light for the benefit of mariners on the summit of a tower, the abbey being the first and last building seen on entering or leaving the harbour of Brest.

Now a large and lofty lighthouse stands on the site of part of the abbey; it is built of stone, in a very solid manner, to withstand the tempests which rage round this storm-beaten cape. The view from the summit is exceedingly grand, embracing a vast sweep of the Atlantic; numerous islands, including that of

Ouessant, or Ushant, off which Keppel engaged the French fleet in 1778, and a host of dark, jagged rocks fringed by foam, appearing like teeth starting from the deep to devour any hapless ships that may come within their reach. This calamity is unfortunately not uncommon, as the passage into the harbour of Brest lies among them, through the much-dreaded Channel du Four, the grave of many a noble ship. So greatly indeed are these islands and channels feared, that the Breton sailor has a proverb—"Celui qui voit Ouessant, voit son sang."

The lighthouse lanterns, which are revolving, emit intense light, so far-reaching that after dark winter-nights the keepers informed me it was not unusual to find the gallery floor beneath the lanterns strewn by the dead bodies of sea-fowl, which have been killed by striking against the glass.

A small ruined chapel adjoins the abbey; this is regarded with great veneration by the peasantry, but any legends belonging to this building and to the abbey seem, with the spirits of the departed monks, to have vanished before the bright eye of science, which, in the form of Soleil's parabolic reflectors, glare above the ruins. After rambling about these, I scrambled to the most projecting rocks on the Point, on one of which a cross has been erected. Here, seated

“In the doorways of the west wind,
In the portals of the sunset,”

I made a sketch of the picturesque scene, and then dined with great zest on a collation which I had prudently brought from Brest. Tourists will do well to act upon this hint, as there is no *auberge* at the abbey.

The walk back to Le Conquet may be varied by visiting the small village of Lochrist, situated about a couple of miles from the abbey, a short distance inland. My principal object in going there, was to see the tomb of the missionary Michel de Nobletz, who, in the seventeenth century, completed the great work of converting the Bretons from Paganism to Christianity, by carrying the cross into the islands of Ouessant and Molene. The tomb of this remarkable person, who was a worthy disciple of our Saviour, consists of a handsome sarcophagus in the middle of the village church. A kneeling statue of the missionary in his robes surmounts the top; the face wears a benign expression, suggestive of good works, which in his case were performed in strict conformity to the injunction to the disciples to “take nothing for their journey, save a staff only; no scrip, no bread, no money in their purse.”

I now returned to Le Conquet, and after partaking of the plain but good fare set before me by the land-

lord of ‘La Grâce de Dieu,’ the name of the inn, drove back to Brest, and entered the town just as the gates were being closed, which the tourist will do well to remember is at nine o’clock during the autumn months. In June and July the gates remain open till ten o’clock, but in winter ingress is not permitted after eight o’clock, and, absurd as it may seem, these military regulations are enforced with great strictness.





Church at Quimper.

CHAPTER XIII.

FAIR AT BREST.—SAIL UP THE HARBOUR.—DOUBLE MURDER BAY.—LANDEVISIE.—WILD PEASANTS.—QUIMPER.—CATHEDRAL.—ST. CORENTIN.—KING GRALLON.—THE MIRACULOUS FISH.—STRANGE CEREMONY.—THE VINE IN BRITTANY.—THE PRINCESS DAHUT.—THE PARDON OF KERDEVOT.—BRETON BEGGARS.—ANTI-CHELERA SPECIFIC.—QUAINT COSTUMES.—ITINERANT TAILORS.—GAGES D'AMOUR.—HAIR-FASHIONS.—RELICS OF ST. KERDEVOT.—ABSOLUTION.—PROCESSION OF THE RELICS.—CUPID'S FIELD-DAYS.—MAIDS AND WIVES.—POPULARITY OF PARDONS.—THE HAIR-MERCHANT.—THE ORGY.—RETURN TO QUIMPER.

THE modern character of Brest was made very apparent on the day succeeding my excursion to St.

Matthew's Abbey by a large fair in the town, which attracted large crowds of peasants from the surrounding country. They were dressed in the costume of their forefathers, and seemed, among the new buildings, like pictures of ancient figures set in modern frames. I spent the morning among them, and at one o'clock left the town in a steamboat, which departs every day at that hour during summer, and steams up the entire length of the harbour to Port Launay, where navigation ceases. This is a most enjoyable trip, far preferable to the land-journey round the harbour. The steamer is certainly small, and the cabin of narrow dimensions; but unless the sea is in a very perturbed condition—which from its land-locked nature is a rare event—sea-sickness need not be apprehended.

Steaming out of the Port, from the mouth of which a magnificent view of the Castle is obtained, we proceeded directly across the harbour, here about four miles broad, to the Pointe des Espagnols. You will regard this place with interest; for here the gallant Frobisher received his death-wound, fighting at the head of a force sent by Queen Elizabeth to assist Henri IV. in dislodging his enemies from the Pointe. Passing between this and the head of the peninsula of Quélern, we entered Daoulas Bay, a fine expanse of water, confined by high hills wooded to their summits.

This bay bears an evil reputation, Daoulas meaning “double murder.” The story runs thus:—In the sixteenth century the Lord of Faou (a small town at the head of the bay), entertaining a strong aversion to Christianity, murdered the Saints Tadec and Judulus before the altars which they had raised for the worship of the living God. To punish this terrible crime a monstrous dragon ravaged the possessions of the unbelieving Lord, who, being terribly alarmed, appeased Divine wrath by building a magnificent Abbey, to which the name of Daoulas was given; though how he was enabled to build it—seeing that his possessions had been destroyed—the legend does not explain. However the Abbey was built; and its ruins show that the Lord of Faou was either very desirous to propitiate the devouring dragon, or very anxious to honour the Christian religion, by the erection of a splendid fane for Divine worship.

Beyond Daoulas Bay the water contracts to about half a mile in width, expanding occasionally to the area of large lakes. Indeed the scenery beyond Daoulas is very much like that of Loch Lomond and the Trosachs,—the steamer winding through long reaches of water reflecting steep hills of very picturesque forms. We stopped opposite the small village of Landevisic to let out and take in passengers. A boat with a crew of wild-looking fellows, wearing

trunk-hose and their hair down to their waists, came alongside to make the exchange. Several casks full of brandy which we had on board destined for this place were pitched into the sea and towed on shore, there being no kind of quay for the convenience of passengers or merchandise. The scenery increased in wild beauty as we proceeded further up the sinuous creek. The banks were covered with long reeds, through which every now and then rough peasants came to look at us. At length, after innumerable windings, the water, which was ebbing fast, proved too shallow for even the light draught of our little steamer, and we came to a standstill opposite a mud bank, about half a mile below Port Launay. Such shortcomings are evidently of no uncommon occurrence, as a barge was ready to meet the exigency of the case. This was interposed between us and the bank, and, by the additional assistance of planks, we stepped on shore, having steamed forty-six miles. This distance will give some idea of the area of this great inland water, which, under the general name of the harbour of Brest, branches into several bays and creeks, indenting the country for many miles. At Port Launay we found diligences waiting to convey us to Quimper, a distance of twenty miles.

Midway we crossed the Montagnes Noires, which branch from the main chain of the Menez hills ; these

form the backbone of Brittany, traversing the country from east to west. Montagnes Noires is a high sounding appellation, but you must not expect to see alpine elevations in Brittany ; the highest portion of the Menez range is only 1300 feet above the sea.

We were now in Cornouaille, named after our Cornwall, one of the four ancient divisions of Armorica, the three others being Léon, Tréguier, and Vannes. Cornouaille, now the Department of the Morbihan, is the marrow of Froissart's "Vrai Bretagne Bretonante," and clings to ancient customs as tenaciously as any other part of Brittany. Celtic is universally spoken, and the inhabitants are in keeping with the savage aspect of their iron-bound coast. If reports be true, the terrible *Droit de Bris* (right of jetsam and flotsam) has not yet ceased to exist in Cornouaille, and the Baie des Trépassés is suggestive of frightful shipwrecks.

The clocks of Quimper were striking eleven when we stopped at the Diligence-office in the town. The Hôtel de l'Épée, the best in Quimper, was closed, and it was only after repeated knockings in a *crescendo* fashion that I obtained admission,—pretty certain evidence that travellers are not numerous in those parts. The *cuisine* fires, according to the *fille de chambre*, were out, and the *garçons* and cooks in bed ; however at my request she ransacked the larder and

placed before me a cold supper, which did great credit to her catering.

Quimper is celebrated for the beauty of its situation, and the grandeur of the cathedral, which is the largest ecclesiastical edifice in Brittany. Throwing open my window in the morning, my eyes fell on a fair scene : beneath, bordered by noble trees, flowed the river Benoudet, murmuring over a granite bed ; beyond the river rose an amphitheatre of woods, from which pretty villas peeped out; and to the left appeared the Cathedral, surmounted by handsome modern spires. It was Sunday morning, and groups of peasants, habited in ancient costume, were walking on the banks of the river. After breakfast I went to the Cathedral, the interior of which presented an extraordinary spectacle.

It was the hour of High Mass, and the vast nave and transepts were filled with figures ; but such figures ! conceive those in the old pictures by Vandermaelen animated, only add more lace and gayer colours, and you will have a faint idea of the worshipping peasants in the Cathedral of Quimper. It was indeed a striking scene ; the high altar blazing with rich decorations, the Bishop in his gorgeous robes, surrounded by numerous priests, the kneeling peasants, each a picture,—the grand music, and the noble Cathedral,—such were the features, lighted by brilliant hues, which

streamed into the building through the lofty painted windows.

The Cathedral of Quimper is dedicated to St. Corentin, a notable saint, much revered in Lower Brittany, and if a tithe of the miracles attributed to him be true, he deserves to stand very high in the calendar. Among these it is related that Grallon, King of Bretagne, was one day hunting, when, finding himself towards evening much oppressed by hunger, he applied to St. Corentin, who was then a hermit, for something to eat. The pious anchorite, who had but a slender stock of provisions, and these mostly herbs, went to a neighbouring fountain, took out a fish which he kept therein, and cut a slice from it, which, inconsiderable as it was, proved sufficient for the King and his suite, and, what was even more miraculous, the fish, after being thus mutilated, instantly became sound and whole again.

No wonder that the monarch, as the story runs, always had recourse to St. Corentin when perplexed to find food for his banquets, which were of very frequent occurrence. Before the Revolution a curious equestrian statue of King Grallon stood over the chief portal of the cathedral, surrounded by numerous interesting armorial shields and heraldic ornaments, all of which, with few exceptions, were demolished by iconoclasts, who seem to have regarded all

effigies with as much detestation as they evinced towards saintly images. Above the King's statue some quaint lines were carved, which thus concluded :—

“ Pour éternel mémoire sa statue à cheval
Fut cy dessus assise au haut de ce portail
Sculptée en pierre bize neuve et dure,
Pour durer à jamais si le portail tant dure.”

A false prophecy, as the portal stands while the statue is no more.

A strange ceremony was practised with reference to this statue before the Revolution : annually, on St. Cecilia's Day, the Bishop of Quimper, accompanied by his clergy, ascended to the platform upon which the statue was placed, with a number of musicians and singers, and, after performing several orchestral pieces, one of the town-archers mounted the crupper of King Grallon's horse, provided with a bottle of wine, a glass, and a napkin. Pouring out a bumper, he offered it to the King, then drank it himself, and, wiping the monarch's mouth with the napkin, cast the glass to the ground. The assembled multitude struggled to catch the vessel, and the Bishop offered one hundred crowns to whoever presented him with the glass unbroken : but it appears that the prelate was never called upon to pay this money. The observance concluded by placing a branch of laurel in the hand of the statue, and singing a hymn.

Tradition assigns the institution of this curious annual ceremony to a desire to perpetuate the remembrance of the introduction of the vine into Brittany.* This, according to the legend, was effected by King Grallon, or Gradlon, surnamed the Great, who flourished in the early part of the fifth century. “Nesciebant usum vini . . . a quo tempore Gradlonus appellatus Magnus Britanniae sceptrum tenebat,” says an old Cartulary; but King Grallon and all his acts are very mythical. Among the stories told of this monarch, is one preserved in a popular ballad to the effect that he kept the keys of enormous locks or dams, the opening of which enabled him at any moment to submerge the city of Is, on the coast of southern Brittany.

It happened however that one night his daughter, the Princess Dahut, desirous of obliterating all traces of a banquet which she had given to her lover, stole the keys of the water-gates from her father while he was sleeping, and opening the sluices inundated the city.

The King was saved by his faithful steed, which was

* The Vine seems to have been cultivated in Brittany and throughout Normandy about three hundred years ago. In the records of the Abbey of Jumiéges, under the date of 1561, mention is frequently made of Vin de Conihoult, grown in an adjoining vineyard, comprising about twenty acres. But we have evidence that the vine flourished in the south of England at the period in question.

heard rushing through the dark night—"Trip, trep, trip, trep," as the ballad expresses it—swift as fire; but the daughter was lost in the rushing flood,—her spirit being heard uttering plaintive melodies, in unison with the waves which break on the wild seashore.*

The towers of the magnificent Cathedral of Quimper have very recently been crowned by two lofty spires of great beauty, and the structure is now in every way worthy of being the house of God.

Good fortune favoured me at Quimper. On returning to my hotel, the waiter informed me that a famous Pardon was to be celebrated during the day at the village of Kerdevot, about ten miles from Quimper. This was particularly agreeable intelligence, as to leave Brittany without seeing a Pardon, would be to leave unseen one of the most curious and interesting spectacles in that primitive country. Accordingly, accompanied by a French gentleman who was staying at the hotel, I left Quimper about noon in a light carriage, and in a short time we were winding amidst a wilderness of hills, clothed with chestnut-trees of great luxuriance. After driving about five miles on the main road, we turned off into one of the

* The student of Celtic literature will remember the Irish and Welsh legends, similar to that current in Brittany, which I have cited,—a proof of their great antiquity.

bye-ways, along which we heaved and rolled convulsively for half an hour, and then came to a dead-lock in a great water-hole. We had made a bargain with our coachman to be driven as far as was practicable; so when, after pointing to the struggling horses, he submitted whether we would not walk the rest of the way—only *trois petits kilomètres*—we willingly assented; and though the three little kilomètres turned out to be nearly double the distance, we did not regret having to use our legs, as, independently of the beauty of the scenery, we fell in with numerous groups of peasants in their gayest and quaintest costumes proceeding to the Pardon. But before describing this remarkable scene, it will be desirable to give some account of the nature of a Breton Pardon.

Every church in Lower Brittany is supposed to be under the protection of a Patron Saint, who, unlike the dormant saints of churches generally, continues to work miracles in favour of the faithful, and has the power of procuring pardon for sinners.

The popularity of the Pardons varies entirely according to the reputed sanctity of the Saint, and the power with which he is supposed to be endowed. Some Saints are famed for their protection of men, others of women, others of children; while some, as St. Cornely, is believed to take cattle under his special care, and his Pardon is consequently attended

by hundreds of beasts driven by their owners to his church in order that the animals may be touched by the saint's relics. Nor are inanimate objects without their patron saint. St. Fiacre, for example, is the protector of plants; the legend of his life declaring that he cultivated botany and the heavenly virtues with equal fervour.

On one day at least in each year the Saint's relics are displayed with great solemnity; and it is on these occasions that, after passing through a certain ordeal of church discipline, penitents are shrived, or, in other words, obtain pardon and remission of their sins.

If the Saint enjoys a reputation for great sanctity, his Pardon is resorted to by thousands of devotees, who crowd his church; and the priests, who are not antagonistic to these proceedings, find at the close of the Pardon that the Saint's *coffre*, or money-box, is heavy with the offerings of the multitude.

Great Pardons generally last three days. The night before they commence the church bells are tolled; the interior is decorated with flowers, and the effigies of the Saints are clothed in the Breton local costume. Then commence the religious observances; but, as we shall see, Pardons are not confined to these alone.

Fortunately St. Kerdevot is particularly venerated, so I was enabled to see a Pardon to great advantage. As we drew near the village, the crowds of peo-

sants increased in number, and the road was lined with beggars, vociferously demanding charity. These people form a prominent and very audible portion of a Breton Pardon. They travel on foot great distances to be present on any eminent saint's day; while the halt and blind are carried and led by their relations and friends, and laid upon rushes by the roadside, near the town, or around the church. Some attract attention, and reap a rich harvest of sous by chanting, in a lugubrious tone, a ballad-legend of the Saint's life and miraculous performances; or the life and death of our Saviour,—always popular subjects with the Breton peasant. These beggars are of a superior order to the tribe of mendicants generally. They invariably find ready and hearty welcome from the cottagers, who offer them the best seat by the fire, and a share of their frugal meal. This is requited by a liberal outpouring of the gossip gleaned in neighbouring villages; and they are careful to tell the girls how many young men have fallen in love with them, and what holy wells possess the greatest love-powers.

Villemarqué observes:—“Il est très-remarquable que, méprisés ailleurs et le rébut de la société, les mendiants en Bretagne soient honorés, et presque l'objet d'un culte affectueux; cette commisération toute Chrétienne emploie les formes les plus naïves et les plus tendres dans les dénominations qu'elle leur

donne ; on les appelle bons pauvres, chers pauvres, pauvrets, pauvres chéris, ou simplement chéris ; quelquefois on les désigne sous le nom d'amis ou de frères du bon Dieu. Nulle part le mendiant n'est rebuté ; il est toujours sûr de trouver un asile et du pain partout, dans le manoir comme dans la chaumière. Dès qu'on l'a entendu réciter ses prières à la porte, ou dès que la voix de son chien a annoncé sa présence, on va au devant de lui, on l'introduit dans la maison, on se hâte de le débarrasser de sa besace et de son bâton, on le fait asseoir au coin du feu, dans le fauteuil même du chef de famille, et prendre quelque nourriture. Après s'être reposé, il chante à son hôte une chanson nouvelle, et ne le quitte jamais que le front joyeux et la besace lourde. Aux noces on le trouve à la place d'honneur au banquet des pauvres, ou il célèbre l'épousée qui le sert elle-même à table.”*

If the beggar be rich in legends, and has the power to sing them, his company is particularly acceptable : for the Breton peasant has a great passion for legendary song. There was a striking illustration of this when Brittany was ravaged by cholera, and the peasants abandoned themselves to despair. In vain did the authorities print and circulate thousands of placards throughout the town and villages, advising the inhabitants how to act. They were treated as waste-

* Barzaz Breiz, vol. i. p. 32.

paper; and the disease was spreading fast, when a bookseller, who knew the power of ballads on the people, happily hit on the expedient of turning the medical men's advice, as set forth in their grave placards, into jingling rhymes, which were speedily circulated throughout Brittany: and with such good effect, that the cholera, to use their own words, was “*chansonné hors de la Bretagne*.” This is of course a slight exaggeration, for the disease was fatal to thousands before its course was finally arrested; but the story shows the power of ballad-poetry over the Bretons, and the truth of the proverb, “The poet is stronger than the three strongest things,—evil, fire, and tempest.”

We had wormed our way along the narrow road, through a continually increasing crowd of peasants, who almost blocked up the way, when we were suddenly liberated from the pressure of our neighbours by emerging on an extensive meadow, planted with trees, which pleasantly screened the sun.

Within this area between two and three thousand peasants were assembled, dressed with few exceptions in quaint and gaudy costumes. The men wore felt-hats with enormous brims, from beneath which long mane-like hair fell to their waists. The crowns of these large headpieces were trimmed with gay *chenille* and artificial flowers, and their shapes were

very varied ; for in Basse Bretagne there is nearly as great a variety in the form of the hat, as there is in that of the women's caps. Near Quimper a peculiar one-cornered hat is in vogue, which imparts information to the world according to the manner in which it is worn, and which must be particularly interesting to ladies : a bachelor places the corner of this queer hat over the right or left ear, a benedict behind, and a widower in front.

The jackets generally worn were light-blue, violet, or green cloth or cotton velvet, fitting tightly, and trimmed with rich gold and silver lace, and many bright brass buttons ; beneath the jacket an equally gay waistcoat was worn, and the breeches of rich brown cloth were invariably of that kind known in Brittany by the name of *bragous*. A broad leather girdle, fastened by a rich metallic buckle of great size, confined this garment round the waist, which was tied at the knees by coloured ribbons terminating in tassels ; the leggings were generally leather, decorated with a profusion of buttons ; and the feet were encased in shoes adorned by huge silver buckles, for which as much as £4 a pair is sometimes given. Dresses of this description are necessarily very expensive, frequently, as I was assured, costing £8 to £12. They are not to be purchased in the towns,—at least my endeavours to procure such costumes

were fruitless,—but are made to order by itinerant tailors, who are boarded and lodged in the peasants' houses while at work on the gay garments. These tailors are a very characteristic feature of Brittany, and have many occupations on their hands besides that of stitching, not the least important being that of making love-matches as well as *bragous*.

Nearly every man carried a formidable stick or cudgel, one end of which terminated in a large knob. This terrible *casse-tête*, as it is called, is a constant companion of the Breton, and is used with great and sometimes deadly effect during rows. It may be observed, as a proof of the antiquity of Breton customs, that a cudgel of this description was carried by the Celts.

The men being so gaily dressed, it may be supposed that the costume of the women was not less gay or varied ; indeed, looking at my notes, I am perplexed by the great number of styles and colours which I jotted down as the gaudy damsels passed before me, the bare enumeration of which would cause this page to resemble a leaf from a 'Magasin des Modes' two centuries old, if such a fashionable publication existed at that date. Without attempting a detailed description, in which I frankly own I should break down, I may briefly state that while the close-fitting caps of all shapes and sizes displayed even stranger forms

than those worn by the Norman peasants, the gowns were particularly conspicuous for their superabundance of gold and silver lace, the boddices, sleeves, and skirts being generally of different colours ; while the person was still further adorned by rich lace-collars of very peculiar cut, and massive gold or silver crosses, and large silver rings.

A Paris publication which I had seen before visiting Brittany, containing coloured representations of the different costumes in that country, led me, who am an admirer of pretty feet, to believe, or at least to expect, that I should see the Breton peasants of the better class wearing sandalled shoes on their feet, which many of the illustrations represented as being of fairy-like proportions. Alas for the reality, and a plague on imaginative artists ! who that is of man's estate in these days of universal travel does not remember the awful, frightful I may say, difference between those fascinating pictures of Swiss peasant-girls, radiant with bright colours and loveliness, which led us, as boys, to believe that Helvetia's daughters were as fair as the fairest scenery among which they lived,—and the terrible reality, in the form of ugly sun-burnt women, bowed by toil and prematurely old ?

Not less striking was the difference between the pictured feet of the Breton girls and their vast real flesh

and blood extremities, encased in shoes which would have been “much” too wide for my feet; yet so universal is the sway of vanity that these shoes were adorned with silver buckles rivalling in size those worn by the men.

Many girls carried slender willow-sticks fastened by gay ribbons to their wrists, exhibiting by the carving of the bark curious devices. They were *gages d'amour*, and, as I was informed, a girl accepting such a wand from a youth paying his addresses to her is regarded as willing to marry the donor. Although by far the majority of the peasants attending the Pardon were arrayed in gaudy and costly costumes, there were others clothed in far more sober garments, which however generally exhibited the peculiar forms of those worn by their richer neighbours.

Among the many strange customs which mark the Breton peasants, there is none more remarkable than that of wearing the hair; for while the men cultivate long tresses hanging down to their waists, and of which they are very proud,* the women do not show a single lock, and the girl who might be tempted by the beauty of her *chevelure* to allow a ringlet to escape

* The custom among men in Brittany of wearing long hair is very ancient. Lucian represents the Armoricans with flowing hair:—

“Quondam per colla decora
Crinibus effusis.”

from beneath her closely-fitting cap, would not only lose all chance of obtaining a lover, but would be regarded by the young men as a *fille perdue*, that is, a coquettish girl unworthy of their affections. To this strange custom many London and Paris ladies are indebted for the magnificent hair which adorns their heads, but which was grown in the wilds of Brittany.

Such were the living features which presented themselves to me; but besides these, tents, booths, and stalls displaying refreshments, principally of an intoxicating nature, were ranged in semicircular lines round the meadow, while the background of the picture was filled by the church, a large handsome structure, with a small chapel contiguous to it, and a rich Calvary representing the death and passion of our Lord. Crowds of peasants were passing in and out of the sacred edifice, attracted by the relics of St. Kerdevot, consisting of fragments of bones, which my limited knowledge of comparative anatomy did not enable me to identify as human.

These relics, which were in a handsome reliquary, were exhibited by a priest to the people, who pressed eagerly forward to kiss the crystal shrine. At a convenient distance stood St. Kerdevot's money-box, into which silver and copper coins rained unceasingly, and the oblation being offered, the high priest gave absolution for past sins.

Seeing these things, who could wonder that the priests lauded the miraculous power of the Saint, to whose crumbling bones such reverence was paid? Truly the Breton, believing as he does in saints innumerable, whom he is taught to believe are perpetually interceding at the gates of heaven for his admission into Paradise, must be happier than the despairing man portrayed by Coleridge,—

“ Sad lot, to have no hope! Though lonely kneeling,
He fain would frame a prayer within his breast,—
Would fain entreat for some sweet breath of healing,
That his sick body might have ease and rest.”

“ *Jetez une boule dans le bourg ; où elle s'arrêtera vous trouverez un honnête homme.*” This is reported to have been the answer of a Breton priest to an inquiry respecting the probity of his parishioners. Did he imagine the ball would ever stop at his door? for can that man be called honest who exacts money from his poor neighbours for ecclesiastical purposes by the sale of prayers and the exhibition of rotten bones? How admirably Béranger hits these gentry in his song, beginning—

“ Satan dit un jour à ses pairs,
On en veut à nos hordes,
C'est en éclairant l'univers
Qu'on éteint les discordes.
Par brevet d'invention

J'ordonne une mission :
En vendant des prières,
Vite, souflons, souflons, morbleu !
Éteignons les lumières
Et rallumons le feu !”

But the interior of the church was not the only holy place in the eyes of the peasants. Without, numerous groups, the men bareheaded, paced slowly round the building, saying prayers and telling their beads as they went ; while others, for the most part women, circumperambulated the church by the slower and more laborious process of progressing on their knees,—humiliation of course not without reward. The Calvary too had devotees, though I am bound to say that a tobacco-stall propped against it came in for a large share of patronage. Indeed nothing was more curious in this motley scene than the strange mixture of apparent godliness and positive worldliness. Prayers being over, drinking began, and, though the day was not far spent, many men were already in a hopeless state of horizontal inebriety. One peasant in this condition was espied by a set of young fellows evidently on the look-out for fun ; a heap of stones near him suggested mischief. Quick as thought were his *bragous* filled with these ; then rousing the drunken boor, they bade him with fierce shouts get up. Vain, most vain were his attempts ! for no sooner was he on his legs than, ballasted as he was,

he came to the ground with a run, and, after numerous attempts with no better result, it was ludicrous in the extreme to see him, when made aware of the weighty cause of his downfall, emptying his capacious *bragous* of their stony contents.

A little before three o'clock a general move took place in the direction of the church, which in a few minutes became full to suffocation. This was preparatory to the great event of the day, the procession of the relics. Psalms, more loud than harmonious, were sung by the excited peasants within, and repeated by those without the church. The order of march was then arranged, and precisely at three o'clock the procession left the church. This was headed by a dozen bareheaded priests, wearing their robes and carrying breviaries, from which they sang scraps of Latin prayers: they were followed by about two hundred peasants, also bareheaded, bearing flags and banners, those representing St. Kerdevot and his miraculous deeds preceding the rest; then came six girls, arrayed in white robes, lace, and flowers, supporting a kind of frame covered with satin: in the centre of this, on a cushion, lay the relics of the Saint and an image of the ubiquitous Virgin. The procession was closed by troops of peasants carrying lighted candles. Thrice, singing loudly, they wound round the church, passing between scurried ranks of spectators,

who fell upon their knees when the reliques were in sight, and then the procession passed round the meadow outside the line of tents. It was curious to mark the effect which the display of the holy reliques had on the peasants, who were, to use Jack's phrase, "half-seas-over :" a moment before they might be seen surging through the crowd, but as the pious chant fell upon the ear and the procession drew nearer, religious awe seemed to obtain mastery over them ; their steps became steadier, and, doffing their huge hats, they stared with a half-crazed expression at the show, but, when the reliques had passed, resumed their boisterous merriment.

Bretons are said to have five virtues and three vices ; the virtues being—love of their country, resignation under the will of God, loyalty, perseverance, and hospitality ; and their vices,—avarice, contempt of women, and drunkenness. Judging by the Pardon at Kerdevot, I should say that the Bretons deserve to be charged with the last-named vice ; brandy was in far greater request than eider, and besides numerous large casks of fire-water standing before each tent, others, slung upon horses, were continually arriving on the ground. With regard to the penultimate vice recorded above, I must say that the Bretons showed no contempt for the women who graced the Pardon ; among the young men Cupid was decidedly in more

favour than Bacchus, and it was no uncommon circumstance to see a row of gaily-dressed fellows making *les yeux doux* to girls evidently not disinclined to receive these attentions, and others of a less refined nature.

These Pardons are indeed Cupid's chief field-days in Brittany, and to be prevented attending them is the greatest punishment that can befall a girl. Married, the scene changes, and then her lord and master is said to merit by his behaviour the character given to him of contempt for the weaker sex. A Breton song sung by peasant brides, touchingly alludes to maiden pleasures and married woes:—" Farewell ! farewell, dear friends of my youth ! I have thrown myself away, and exchanged a life of joy for one of pain. Sorrow and grief await me : I am but a servant now, for I am married. Then hasten, O ye who are free, to Pardons, and enjoy life while ye may ! Farewell ! dear friends of my youth, farewell !"

The great desire to attend Pardons, which possess other attractions besides those of religion, was strikingly exemplified by a terrible catastrophe that happened on the Sunday preceding that of the Pardon of St. Kerdevot, when another Pardon was held at Benodet, eighteen miles south of Quimper. Thirty young persons of that town having set their hearts on going to the Pardon, took advantage of the ab-

sence of a gentleman to carry off a boat which he had secured to a chain, in consequence of the bark being no longer seaworthy. In this frail craft the party,

“Youth at the helm, and pleasure at the prow,”

started on their ill-fated expedition. About half the trip had been accomplished when the boat was found to be rapidly filling. Presence of mind and coolness might have saved the unfortunate company; but shriek succeeded shriek, and in their terror they hastened their destruction. The boat speedily sank, and only six contrived to reach the shore, the rest perished; and as successive flowing tides cast up the bodies, the great cathedral bell of Quimper rang out for many days the awful tale of woe.

The long procession had now made the prescribed rounds; the banners were restored to their resting-places, the relics carefully placed in the shrine over the high altar, the last blessing was said, and the multitude were let loose to run up a fresh score of sins.

Strolling through the scene, my attention was attracted by a crowd round a half-ruined house. Wedging my way to the entrance, I saw a man standing in the middle of a room armed with a formidable pair of scissors, with which he was clipping the hair from a girl’s head with a rapidity and dexterity bespeaking long practice. For not only was the opera-

tion performed with almost bewildering quickness, but when the girl was liberated her head assumed the appearance of having been shaved. There was great laughing among the peasants as she emerged from the house, leaving the long tresses in the hands of the hair-merchant, who, after combing them carefully, wound them up in a wreath and placed them in a basket already nearly half-full of hair. For, as I heard, he had been driving a highly profitable trade all the day ; and girls were still coming in willing, and in some cases apparently eager, to exchange their fine *chevelures*—which would have been the glory of girls anywhere but in Brittany—for three poor little handkerchiefs of gaudy hues, scarcely worth a dozen sous ! This terrible mutilation of one of woman's most beautiful gifts distressed me considerably at first ; but when I beheld the perfect indifference of the girls to the loss of their hair, and remembered how studiously they conceal their tresses, my feelings underwent a change, and I looked at length upon the wholesale cropping as rather amusing than otherwise.

Great was the apparent disappointment of girls whose tresses, although seemingly abundant and fine, did not come up to the hair-merchant's standard ; but the fellow had so abundant a market that he was only disposed to buy when the goods were particularly choice. His profits too must have been great, as the

average price of a good head of hair, when cleaned, is eleven shillings.

A Pardon without dancing would be wanting in one of the chief features of pleasure. Accordingly, when the procession was over, the excited peasants formed a vast ring and whirled round in the same fashion as I witnessed in the *ronde* at Châtelaudren. At the conclusion of each dance a general rush was made towards the refreshment booths, where strong drinks were in great request ; with these, cakes called *crêpe* were eaten, consisting of flour, sugar, and milk, rolled out to the consistency of a wafer and baked ; they were sold in sheets about three feet square, and extensively patronized by young Breton gallants, who presented them to their partners, folding them with their brawny hands for convenient stowage within the mouths of their sweethearts. The price of the cakes was one sou per sheet, so, as may be supposed, though superficially large, one was not a *pièce de résistance* to the jaws of a Breton girl, accustomed to the severe discipline of hard black bread.

As the evening fell the mirth and jollity partook more of a boisterous character, and scenes were enacted which showed that the proverb respecting the moral distance between God and Church holds good in Brittany ; for the grey walls of St. Kerdevot, within which so many prayers had been muttered in

the morning, looked down, as the moon silvered the exquisite finials of the lofty spire, on broken vows and wild revelry, which, regardless of the sanctity of the church, desecrated the walls of the building. But such is a Breton Pardon,—commenced by penitence, groans, and tears, concluding in shouts, imprecations, and debauchery ; and as evidence that this description is not exaggerated, hear Émile Souvestre's testimony in his account of a Pardon at Guingamp :—“ La sainte cérémonie finit le plus souvent par une orgie. A peine le cantique est-il achevé, que les rangs des pèlerins se rompent ; des cris de joie, des appels, des rires éclatants succèdent au recueillement de la procession. La foule des pénitents se rassemble sur la place, où tous doivent coucher pêle-mêle sur la terre nue. Femmes et garçons se mêlent, se rencontrent, se prennent au bras, s'agaçent, se poursuivent à travers les rues obscures ; et le lendemain, quand le jour se lève, bien des jeunes filles égarées rejoignent leurs mères le front rouge et les yeux honteux, avec un péché de plus à avouer au recteur de la paroisse.”* This was written twenty years ago, and if the Pardon of St. Kerdevot be a fair example of these ceremonies in Brittany, Souvestre's description requires no modification ; and as I withdrew from the strange scene which I have attempted to portray, I came to the

* *Les Derniers Bretons.*

conclusion that while the Breton has retained the costume of his forefathers, he has also retained their love for intoxication and boisterous merriment.

Villemarqué and other writers declare that the clergy in Brittany have long endeavoured to curb the excessive license prevalent at Pardons. If this be true, it must be conceded that their influence is very slight. Ballad-makers appear to have been more successful. It is related that some of these rude poets, shocked by the scenes which they witnessed, composed ballads reproving drunkards and showing the fatal effects of intoxication. These were sung in the Communes prior to *fêtes* with such good effect, that the number of drunken peasants was greatly diminished.





Chateau Roche-Aigue.

CHAPTER XIV.

AGRÉMENS OF QUIMPER.—THE RED MONKS.—STRANGE LEGEND.—DRIVE TO QUIMPERLÉ.—PARDON OF ST. BANNALEC.—EXTRAORDINARY HEAD-DRESS.—ABBAYE OF ST. CROIX.—THE ABBOT'S ROOM.—A TROUTY STREAM.—THE ABBEY GARDENS.—EXQUISITE SKETCHING SUBJECTS.—OLD ABBEY CHURCH.—ST. GURLOT, HIS CURATIVE POWERS.—THE CARTULARY.—GREAT EXCITEMENT.—FOREST OF CARNOET.—PARDON DES OISEAUX.—DRIVE TO L'ORIENT.—MODERN CHARACTER OF THE TOWN.—GENERAL SINCLAIR.—THE VIRGIN'S PROTECTION.—NOTRE DAME DE L'ARMOR.—BLESSING THE SARDINE FISHERY.—DRIVE TO HENNEBON.—JEANNY LA FLAMME.—HER VALIANT DEEDS.—BRETON BALLAD.—NOTRE DAME DE LA JOIE.—THE IRON WOMAN.—THE VENUS OF QUIMPIILI.—DRIVE TO AURAY.

THE charming scenery around Quimper, and the numerous *agrémens* of the town, have led several English families to make that place their home; and to

those fond of shooting and fishing, the surrounding woods and numerous rivers afford additional attractions. The sketcher will be tempted to pause in the town for a day by the old buildings, which yield many delightful bits. Unfortunately the march of so-called improvement has swept away the ruins of the Church of the Cordeliers, which were extremely picturesque, and I was informed that the fragment of a very ancient house near the town, formerly inhabited by a society of Templars, is also marked for destruction.

These Templars, or Red Monks as they are called in Brittany, form the burden of a curious Breton legend, transmitted from generation to generation in the form of a popular ballad.

According to the story, certain Red Monks were in the habit of abducting beautiful girls, secreting them in their monastery, and, at the expiration of some weeks or months, burying them alive beneath crucifixes in their chapel.

Their crimes being at length discovered, a terrible example was made of three of the fraternity, who being detected in the act of burying a girl and her infant, were burned alive, and their ashes cast to the wind. And now imaginative Bretons see on certain nights three monks clothed in white mantles, with a large red cross on their breast, riding furiously

on the skeletons of horses in black housings. Woe then to the fair damsels of Quimper! for on these occasions the sensual monks are in quest of beautiful girls, for whom they are said to have a decided predilection.

There is too much reason to apprehend that this dark legend was originally invented to reconcile the people to the persecutions practised against the Templars. Frémenville states that the name “Temple des faux dieux,” given to the dwelling of this community near Quimper, “a été inventé par ses persécuteurs pour accréditer, dans l'esprit du peuple, l'accusation d'idolâtrie portée, comme on le sait, contre les Templiers. Cette calomnie est arrivée de bouche en bouche jusqu'au temps où nous vivons.”*

My journey from Quimper to Quimperlé, twenty-seven miles, was effected very pleasantly in a *caleche de retour*; midway our progress was delayed by the road being blocked by vast numbers of peasants, who were celebrating the Pardon of St. Bannalec, near a village of that name. The same quaint and picturesque costumes seen at Kerdevot were here, with some modification however, for every district in La Basse Bretagne has a peculiar cut of garment; thus the trunk-hose, which in the neighbourhood of Quimper bags boldly out from the loins, were worn here much

* ‘Guide dans Finisterre,’ p. 57.

more confined at that part of the body, but swelled into huge pouches immediately above the knees. The women's caps were also different; one build was a *chef-d'œuvre* of lace, frills, ribbons, and starch, defying description. I had an excellent opportunity of studying the fabric; for having stopped to look at the motley multitude, who were for the most part in a condition of uproarious enjoyment, a girl crowned by one of these marvellous head-pieces accosted my driver, whom she knew, and asked him to give her a lift to a village near Quimperlé. Having given my consent to the request she entered the vehicle, and the reader will see a *souvenir* of the damsel at the end of this Chapter. Through the driver, who acted as interpreter, I learned that the cap, which required great skill to make, cost one hundred francs. I also discovered that the girl, who was pretty, had sold her hair, which I suspected, as no stray ringlet or lock was visible; in her opinion, a cap nearly two feet wide was far more bewitching than the most magnificent *chevelure*, and more likely to fascinate a swain.

You will do well to pause for a night in the grass-grown streets of Quimperlé, if only to sleep in the 'Lion d'Or,' formerly the residence of the Abbot who ruled the adjoining Abbey of St. Croix. Although the evening had scarcely fallen when we entered the

town, the hotel-door was closed ; but after vigorous knockings I brought a damsel out of the depths of long and dim passages. Was the inn full, that the welcome was so tardy and cold ? Alas for the landlady ! no : there was not a traveller in the house, so I was given the best room, which was that occupied in olden time by the lordly Abbot of St. Croix,—a noble apartment with huge bay-windows, ponderous beams, and a vast fireplace with an opening of such capacity that all the spirits of the ancient monks might have descended the chimney without jostling. But I am bound to say that beyond the lulling sound of a river behind the hotel, no other noise fell on my ears during the night.

“ He that wishes to rise early, let him borrow the pillow of a debtor,” so says the Spanish proverb ; but the angler who goes to bed with the knowledge that he is within hearing of a trout-stream needs no other incentive to rouse him from his slumbers.

Being, as the reader has discovered, a member of the Waltonian fraternity, or rather of the Fly branch of the craft,—for I have a Byronian antipathy to old Izaak’s hook-and-worm doctrine,—I rose early, to make acquaintance with the trout, which my landlady assured me might be seen from the end of the garden disporting themselves in the river.

The Monks of St. Croix, like their brotherhood

generally, had an admirable appreciation of the beautiful. The Abbey, a long and handsome structure, stands on the marge of the Elle, a dashing trout-stream, which, there is little doubt, furnished the monks with many a dainty dish. The river is sheltered from the north by softly swelling hills draped with woods, and the space between the water and Abbey is laid out in lovely gardens; that attached to the Abbot's house is the most beautiful, while vines, fig and other fruit-trees of ancient growth testify that the *utile* was not forgotten by the monks in their horticultural arrangements. A dove-cot, in the form of a picturesque tower, stands at the bottom of the Abbot's garden, from which a terrace-walk extends along the river.

The morning was not propitious for fishing, being too bright; but by allowing my flies to play among the "crisping ripples"

"And tender curving lines of creamy spray,"

which have a peculiar charm to the angler's eye, I succeeded in catching a pretty good dish of trout without going beyond the terrace; and had I ascended the river, I have no doubt that I should have filled a basket. But while fishing I discovered so many exquisite sketching bits, that I relinquished my rod and spent the remaining morning hours in transferring a few of the beautiful scenes to my portfolio.

After breakfast, at which my trout figured with great credit to them selves, I visited the old Abbey Church,—so old and decayed that a few days before my visit the Bishop of Quimper had ordered Divine service to be discontinued until certain repairs had been executed.

The structure, which dates from 1029, is extremely curious, and possesses great architectural interest, combining the forms of a circle and cross. The rotunda, used as the choir, is surmounted by a dome supported by immense pillars with gouty pedestals and strangely sculptured capitals. The eastern side of the building is terminated by an apse, the south by a semicircular chapel, and the north and west by square projections covered with representations of monstrous animals. High-set and small windows cast a dim light into the building. The altar, which is to the east of the rotunda, is approached by three flights of steps of remarkable construction. Other steps lead to a very curious crypt, which has every appearance of great antiquity. Here, according to legends, St. Gurlot suffered martyrdom. The chains with which he is said to have been bound are still attached to one of the pillars, and a tomb is shown within which his holy ashes are believed to rest. The most cursory inspection is however sufficient to show that this tomb is that of a comparatively modern

bishop, whose effigy, in his sacred vestments and insignia, surmount the sarcophagus. But superstitious peasants are never prone to disturb deep-rooted traditions, and so Bretons believe that St. Gurlot's remains lie within the Bishop's tomb ; and moreover that, on certain days, thrusting the left arm into a hole in the side of the sarcophagus has the virtue of curing diseases,—a fact vouched for by numerous *ex voto* offerings, and the frequent comfortable replenishings of St. Gurlot's money-box placed near his imaginary tomb.

Lovers of ancient ecclesiastical architecture will be pleased to learn that this curious church, which bears great analogy to the early Roman temples, is likely to be restored by the French Government. As usual, the venerable building suffered much by the Revolutionary iconoclasts, who however seem to have spent their principal fury on the adjoining abbey. This, which, with the exception of the Abbot's house, has been converted into municipal offices, containing a remarkably fine library, was pillaged and almost entirely destroyed. The Cartulary of the Abbey was however saved ; this document gives a list of the Abbots of St. Croix, among whom was Odet de Colligny, Cardinal of Chantillon, to whom Rabelais dedicated his satirical novels.

On issuing from the church, I found the little town

in a state of great commotion,—people rushing to and fro in hot haste, and gesticulating energetically in front of the Mairie. What had happened? Had I fallen asleep in the dim old structure, and dreamed through rolling years? Proceeding to the Mairie, the cause was explained. A scrap of paper affixed to the wall, headed “*Dépêche Télégraphique*,” announced that Sebastopol had been taken. Every gun and flag in the town was put in requisition to do honour to the great event,—great indeed to France, as her army had stormed and taken the redoubtable Malakhoff. Business was suspended, and the inhabitants gave themselves up to rejoicing, never doubting that, Sebastopol having fallen, Russia would forthwith sue for peace. I was pained, though not surprised, to hear adverse and harsh criticism upon the conduct of the English Allies, whose military glory had been already greatly dimmed in the eyes of nations by disparaging articles in English journals. Our system of promotion in the army—money taking the place of science—has long excited the wonder of foreigners; and Continental nations were of course prepared to believe that, although our soldiers fight well, our officers are for the most part sadly ignorant of war-tactics.

I strolled in the afternoon to the Forest of Carnoet, which extends to the south side of the town. This is one of the largest forests in Finisterre, and con-

tains some remarkable Celtic remains, principally of a sepulchral character. Recent excavations in a tumulus disclosed several gold collars, rings, and flint arrow-heads.

The Forest of Carnoet is the scene of one of the most popular and curious Pardons in Brittany. Annually, in the leafy mouth of June, thousands of peasants flock to St. Carnoet's shrine in a small church near a village of that name, situated in the heart of the forest, bringing with them various kinds of land and sea-birds in gay cages, which are purchased by the gentry for their children. The usual religious ceremonies accompany this "Pardon des Oiseaux," which closes with the debauchery and dissipation unfortunately characteristic of these *fêtes*.

In the afternoon I drove to L'Orient (fourteen miles). This seaport is of very modern date; Madame de Sévigné, writing in 1689, says that she was shown a locality about a league from the sea, between Quimperlé and Hennebon, which was to be made a port for Indian merchandise, and on this account called L'Orient. The town was built in 1719, and soon attained considerable importance under the fostering influence of "La Compagnie des Indes Orientales," who carried on extensive commercial transactions.

The Company was dissolved in 1770; but the port,

having been selected for a Government dockyard, continued to flourish, and now possesses 25,000 inhabitants. Thus L'Orient, composed entirely of modern houses, has little to arrest the tourist in search of the picturesque and beautiful. As at Brest, on entering the town, you pass out of Brittany into a modern creation ; indeed, if you stop at the principal hotel, you are likely to be forcibly reminded of Paris or Marseilles. My supper was enlivened by a set of joyous *commis-voyageurs*, who celebrated their accidental meeting by deep libations of the best wine they could obtain, breaking forth periodically into *chansons à boire*, one of which had this *refrain* :—

“ Ah !—verse encore !—
Vidons l'amphore.
Qu'un flot divin
De ce vieux vin
Calme la soif qui me dévore !”

The renown of the Oriental Company which I have mentioned gave rise to a religious *fête*, held in great estimation by the inhabitants of L'Orient.

When the town was in the plenitude of commercial prosperity it excited the cupidity of the English, who threatened its destruction by a force commanded by General Sinclair. This officer, who conceived that the inhabitants would not dare to make any resistance to his army, declared that unless the keys of the

town were brought to him he would put the population to the sword.

The citizens in their predicament determined on having recourse to the Virgin. The municipal authorities went in solemn procession to a chapel containing her statue, and vowed that if she would save the town, they and their successors would celebrate an annual *fête* to her honour.

The prayer was granted : L'Orient was saved,—of course by the mediation of the Blessed Lady, who was forthwith promoted to the dignity of Patroness of the town, and henceforth called “*Notre Dame de la Victoire*.”

But she is not without a rival : the sailors, and particularly those engaged in the sardine fishery, have a great regard for another image placed in a small chapel to the east of the harbour, representing *Notre Dame de l'Armor*—Our Lady of the Sea. Before the Revolution, every man-of-war entering or leaving L'Orient saluted *Notre Dame de l'Armor* with three guns ; and I was informed that this observance, after having fallen into abeyance for half a century, has lately been revived, to the great satisfaction of the French man-o'-war's-man.

The ceremony of blessing the opening of the sardine fishery is celebrated annually, a short distance from the chapel. On the morning of St. John's Day

the clergy, preceded by crucifixes and banners, walk in procession from the chapel to the beach, and embark in boats ; in these they proceed about a couple of miles to sea, where they are met by about five hundred boats from L'Orient and other places on the coast. These are formed into a circle, the boats containing the priests being in the centre, and the benediction is pronounced. Then, if the weather be favourable, loud strains of rejoicing burst forth, and the fishermen speed over the waters confident of success.

The shrine of Notre Dame de l'Armor is a favourite resort of mariners, who make votive offerings for their deliverance from the perils of shipwreck. Villemarqué says, in allusion to their pilgrimages, “ Rien de touchant comme ces bandes de rudes matelots, qui viennent, nu-pieds et en chemise, pour accomplir le vœu qui les a sauvés du naufrage, portant sur leurs épaules meurtries les débris de leur navire fracassé ;—rien de majestueux comme cette multitude innombrable précédée par la croix, qui s'avance en priant le long des grèves, et dont les chants se mêlent aux roulements de l'Océan.”*

Indeed the Breton mariner is quite as grateful to the Blessed Virgin for his preservation from shipwreck, or at least as confident in her protecting in-

* Barzaz Breiz.

fluence, as are the Mediterranean seamen, who, during the pauses in a storm, may be heard singing, in their harmonious language,—

“ In mare irato, in subita procella
 Invoco te, nostra benigna Stella ! ”

Hennebon, my next stage (eight miles from L'Orient), is a most interesting old town, set in a lovely country. Besides the picturesque walls and towers which peep out here and there, draped with gaudy lichens and fringed with wild-flowers, there is an exquisite Gothic church, said to have been built by the English, and many charming old houses which will be found admirable subjects for sketching.

Great historical interest also attaches to Hennebon ; for here the heroic wife of John of Montfort acquired her unfeminine *sobriquet* of Jeanne la Flamme by valiant deeds which furnished Froissart with matter for one of his most stirring chapters.

The army of Charles de Blois, brother to the King of France, and John of Montfort's inveterate foe, had invested Nantes in 1341, when that city was held by Montfort. The citadel was well fortified and garrisoned ; but the citizens were so terrified by the spectacle of thirty bleeding Breton heads cast over the walls by the besiegers, with a notification that if they did not open the gates they would be also beheaded, that they surrendered themselves prisoners, and the

Duke of Montfort was carried to Paris and imprisoned in the Louvre.

His wife was at Rennes when she heard this disastrous intelligence. With wonderful promptitude she put herself at the head of her husband's shattered army, exclaiming, "Montfort is taken, but nothing is lost!—he was but a man! See, here is my son, who, please God, will prove his worthy successor!" Then reanimating the drooping courage of the troops, she swelled their numbers by men who flocked to her standard eager to serve under so noble a lady, and marched at their head to Hennebon, within which she entrenched herself, and waited for expected reinforcements from England.

Charles de Blois forthwith invested that town with his victorious army, hoping to capture the Countess and thus terminate the war. But he found this far more difficult than he imagined; and although the siege was continued for several days with considerable advantage on the side of the besiegers, the town was not taken.

The prodigies of valour performed by the Countess of Montfort during this trying period are almost incredible. Accompanied by a few trusty soldiers, she sallied forth, clothed in armour, and with her own hand set fire to the enemy's camp, a deed which gained her the name of Jeanne la Flamme.

At length preparations were made for an overwhelming assault; and the besiegers, losing heart, were about to surrender, when the Countess implored them to hold out for three days longer.

Night and day closed twice upon the nearly worn-out troops, and the capture of the town seemed inevitable, when the Duchess, who had been gazing earnestly seaward from her lofty watch-tower, descried the English fleet, commanded by the gallant Sir Walter de Mannay, sailing up the Blavet. The town was saved, and Jeanne in joyful gratitude for her deliverance kissed Sir Walter and his companions many times. Froissart, whose pen warms over this history, thus describes the scene:—“Qui a donc vu la Duchesse descendre du chastel à grande chère et baiser Messire Gautier de Manny et ses compagnons les uns après les autres, deux ou trois fois, bien peut dire que c’était une bien vaillante dame.”

But Jeanne’s labours were not destined to be terminated by this happy issue out of her troubles. In 1342 a second attack was made upon Hennebon, and she crossed the Channel to beg further succours from England, by the aid of which she won additional renown.

Breton poets, always fond of tales of daring, have made Jeanne’s deeds the theme of many ballads, which remain household words in Brittany. The

most celebrated is entitled “Jeanne la Flamme.” A few verses may interest the reader.

“ See! a French army is besieging Hennebon,
 And the Duchess is on her watch-tower, while the bells ring out
 wild alarms.
 Hark to the Frenchmen’s boast! ‘ We’ll sack the town, and take
 the Duchess and her cub.’
 But she replied, ‘ Not so;’ and she clothed herself in steel, a helm
 on her head, a sword by her side, and a brand in her hand,
 And choosing three hundred trusty soldiers, she sallied forth.
 The French were carousing, and singing gaily in their tents,
 When in the midnight hours they heard a strange voice :—
 ‘ More than one who laughs this night will weep before the morn ;
 More than one who eats white bread will bite the dust ere long :
 More than one who sheds red wine will shed his redder blood.’
 Then rose the cry of ‘ Fire! fire! ’ Tis here, ’tis there, ’tis everywhere!
 See! see! ’tis Jeanne la Flamme who fires the camp.
 The tents are burnt, and the French are roasted,
 And the Duchess smiled when she saw the pleasant sight.
 ‘ ’Tis well! ’tis well! for every grain we shall have ten!
 For the ancients spoke the truth :—There is nothing like the bones
 of Gauls,
 No, nothing like the powdered bones of Gauls, to make the white
 wheat grow.”*

The walks in the neighbourhood of Hennebon are delightful; my memory reverts with great pleasure to a ramble during a brilliant sunset, which steeped

“ All the vale in rosy folds,”

up the Blavet to the ruins, or site rather, for there is scarcely a vestige remaining of the once famous Cis-

* Barzaz Breiz, vol. i. p. 313.

tercian Convent of Notre Dame de la Joie, whose female inmates, if tradition be trustworthy, were more disposed to act up to the motto on their banner in the flesh than in the spirit.

Scandalous legends indeed go so far as to associate their doings with a certain curious statue near Baud, a few miles north of Hennebon, called by the peasants *Grouec'h Houam*, the Iron Woman, but more generally known as the Venus of Quimpili. The figure represents a naked female, rudely sculptured in granite, about seven feet high, which has long been a great puzzle to antiquaries, who are entirely at a loss respecting the origin and history of the strange image.

The features and form of the statue are as unlike as possible to that—

“ — bella Venere,
Che sola sei
Piacer degli uomini
E degli Dei!”

Yet, like many other statues, remarkable rather for their hideousness than for their grace or beauty, this ugly Venus is an object of great veneration to the Bretons, notwithstanding the obscene ceremonies with which the history of the image is associated. These were so scandalous that about the thirteenth century the Bishop of Vannes ordered the statue to be cast into the adjoining river Evete; but the peasants were

greatly enraged, and, having recovered their beloved Iron Woman, set her upon her former pedestal, where she may be seen to this day, displaying the inscription,—

“*VENERI VICTRICI,*”

and

“*VENVS ARMORICVM ORACULVM.*”

From Hennebon I drove to Auray (sixteen miles), and took up my quarters at the ‘Pavillon d'en Haut,’ which deservedly enjoys the reputation of being not only the best inn in the town, but one of the most comfortable in La Basse Bretagne.





The Plain of Carnac.

CHAPTER XV.

EXCURSION TO CARNAC.—ABUNDANT BREAKFAST.—THE STONES OF CARNAC.—LEGEND.—ST. CORNELY.—THE SOLDIERS' SKELETONS.—VARIETY OF DRUIDICAL MONUMENTS.—GIGANTIC STONES OF LE MANAEC.—NATURE OF THE LINES.—GREAT DEPREDATIONS.—ST. MICHAEL'S MOUNT.—CELTIC DRUIDESSES.—THEORIES RESPECTING CARNAC.—DRACONTIUM.—SERPENT WORSHIP.—ST. CEDO.—KERMARIO.—CARNAC CHURCH.—RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES.—PLOUHARNEZ.—VAST DOLMENS.—GOLD COLLARS.—LINES OF ERDEVEN.—RETURN TO AURAY.

AMONG the many objects of interest in Brittany—which, in consequence of the rail-less state of that country, are still comparatively unknown to tourists, who for the most part pursue the beaten track—Carnac holds a foremost place.

To visit this great and mysterious monument of an

ancient people had long been one of my favourite day-dreams ; and those who have stood on the threshold of the realization of their hopes, will appreciate my feelings of pleasure, when, throwing open my window on the morning after my arrival at Auray, brilliant sunshine “glorified”—as Sydney Smith would have said—my room, and I beheld a cloudless sky. Thus favoured, I made ready to spend the day on the plain of Carnac, one of the preparations, and not the least important, being to breakfast in good old English fashion. And here let me render justice to the *cuisine* of the ‘Pavillon d’en Haut,’ the *chef* of which, if you tell him that you desire to breakfast well, will astonish you by the multiplicity and excellence of his dishes. I find the entertainment which he set before me most honourably mentioned in my note-book, and that it consisted of delicious oysters, prawns, sardines, mullets, kidneys, mutton and veal cutlets, beefsteaks, and a bewildering variety of vegetables and fruits.

Having fortified the inner man, I started in a light but stout-sprunged cabriolet for Carnac, nine miles from Auray. About midway the country changed character, and, from being highly cultivated and smiling, became more and more wild. Presently the road entered a vast undulating plain, streaked by the purple tints of rich heather, and swelling here and there into soft hills, bounded on the south by the ocean.

Sweeping the horizon in this direction, the eye is arrested by small protuberances which dot the plain for miles: they are the stones of Carnac: scan them well, you will perceive that while they stretch far away to the east and west, a great gap exists before you. The stones which occupied this space have been used, as a quarry, to build the village of Carnac; and the lofty and graceful church-spire, composed of these stones and surmounted by the symbol of Christianity, looks down upon the vast heathen monuments.

About a couple of miles from the village we diverged from the main road, and followed a rough track across the heath to the left. We pursued this until the extreme ruggedness of the plain rendered further advance almost impossible. My honest driver lamented the stoppage; but I was more pleased than otherwise that my drive was at an end, and was not less pleased to find that no garrulous guides pounced on me when I alighted from the carriage. So, when my man departed for the *auberge*, where he said I should find him, I was happily alone; for Carnac is one of those places where solitude becomes a luxury, and consequently where guides would be more than usually vexatious and troublesome; for what could they tell the visitor respecting the mysterious ranks of obelisks, the purposes of which have baffled speculative investigations and learned inquiries? No-

thing beyond the whimsical legend current among Bretons, that the stones of Carnac are the soldiers of a mighty army petrified by St. Cornely, who, being hard pressed by them, took the effectual method of frustrating their murderous purposes by turning them into stone.

The skeletons of the soldiers, adds the legend, may be seen on certain occasions at midnight, in the churchyard at Carnac, performing penance for the sins committed in the flesh against the saint, and listening reverently to sermons preached by Death himself.

If you are curious to know more, you will be shown the pulpit of the grim preacher, a dilapidated stone Calvary, and, if you have sufficient courage, you may even hear the sermon ; though, if accounts be true, the penalty of intrusion, on being detected by the ghastly congregation, is far more severe than that with which Tam o' Shanter was threatened.

The vast space occupied by the stones is the great wonder of Carnac. There are many so-called Druidical remains where stones, similarly-shaped, exist, but none at all comparable in extent to those at Carnac. The lines of stones can still be traced for eight miles, and there is every reason to believe that they extended four miles further in the direction of Loc-Maria-Ker ; nor are they confined to the great

plain of Carnac. The peninsula of Quiberon, which extends nine miles to the south-west, is covered with similar remains, and the islands in the sea of Morbihan, opposite Loc-Maria-Ker, also contain Celtic monuments.

The great variety of these is another very interesting feature of Carnac; Menhirs, Galgals, Tumuli, Dolmens, and Cromlechs are met with throughout the peninsula.

A Menhir (derived from the Breton words *maen*, stone, and *hir*, long) is simply a long stone set in the ground, with its longest axis vertical. A Galgal is a heap of stones formed for sepulchral or worshipping purposes. A Tumulus, as the name implies, is composed of a heap, generally of earth and stones, raised over graves.

A Dolmen, which consists of one or more large stones reposing on others set lengthwise in the ground, is derived from *taul* or *daul*, which in Breton signifies table, and *maen*, a stone: this monument, also called *pierre levée* and *table du Diable*, is very common in the Morbihan.

The Cromlech, or *chaudron du Diable*, consists of stones arranged in a circular or elliptical form, occasionally covered by cap-stones. The word is derived from *croun*, Breton (*cromen*, Welsh), meaning bent or round, and *lech*, place or stone.

Recent extensive researches in Great Britain, and particularly in the Channel Islands, have led to the conclusion that cromlechs were the sepulchres of a very remote people; and it is a curious fact, that the ornamental designs on the vases found in the Guernsey cromlechs are similar to those on the vases discovered in cromlechs at Carnac.*

A short walk brought me to the huge stones of Le Manaec, among the largest at Carnac. There they stood, vast masses of unhewn granite coated with lichens of enormous growth,† ranged in eleven lines, forming ten avenues running east and west. The breadth of these avenues averages eleven yards, and the distance between the stones in the lines six yards. The height of the blocks in this portion of the monument ranges from six feet to seventeen feet. In all cases where the masses are tabular they are set upright in the ground, the smaller end downwards, and their edges bearing east and west.

Numerous calculations have been made respecting the original number of stones at Carnac; they probably did not fall far short of twenty thousand, and the present number has been estimated at about

* See Mr. Lukis's 'Account of the Primeval Antiquities of the Channel Islands.'

† Principally *Parmelia caperata* and *Ramalina scopulorum*, which flourish in the moist climate of South Brittany.

twelve thousand. Great gaps exist between the stones, arising, as is supposed, from frequent depredations. According to good authority, two thousand stones at least have been removed between St. Barbe and Carnac alone, a distance of five furlongs. The losses were indeed so great as to have at length aroused the attention of the French Government, which led to the appointment of a Conservator of Antiquities for the Department of the Morbihan, by which means this great monument has been preserved from further destruction.

The disconnected nature of the lines and their vast extent render it extremely difficult to form an accurate idea of their configuration. The point of view embracing the largest number of stones is St. Michael's Mount ; this is an artificial tumulus, about eighty feet high, half a mile south of the great line of stones, and a quarter of a mile from the village of Carnac. There is every reason to believe that the mount was raised in honour of Bel. On the introduction of Christianity a chapel was built on the summit, dedicated to St. Michael the Archangel.

The view from this elevation is most striking ; the lines of stones are visible for many miles, in some places dotting the plain, in others appearing like towers ; now suddenly terminating, and then, at the distance of half a mile, recommencing, and continuing

until the avenues are fairly lost on the horizon to the east; while to the west they appear to end at the base of a tumulus nearly two hundred feet high, though they are really continued beyond the mound, and in fact only terminate on the shores of a small inland sea communicating with the Bay of Quiberon.

Careful inspection of the avenues from this elevation shows that, although they appear to be straight when viewed close, they are considerably curved, and in some places assume a sinuous figure.

Gazing on the extraordinary and impressive spectacle presented by this great assemblage of stones, hoary with the age of at least twenty centuries, the mind insensibly falls into a train of speculation respecting the purposes for which they were set up.

Several pages might be occupied by the curious theories advanced to account for their existence, many of which have been propounded by antiquaries, to whom Carnac has always been a fruitful field of discussion.

Geologists too, who are quite as speculative as antiquaries respecting matters open to theory, have made Carnac the subject of ingenious speculation. Some contend that the stones are the result of a wearing away of the soil, or other substance, which originally filled the intervening spaces to the height of the summit of the blocks. Certainly meteorologi-

cal and other influences have been and are in constant operation on the earth's crust, exalting valleys, and effecting slow but mighty changes, which

“Draw down Æonian hills, and sow
The dust of Continents to be ;”

but an examination of the stones in question will, I conceive, render it at once apparent that their present position is due to artificial means. True, we see isolated peaks or needles in central France, as at Le Puy and elsewhere, which in all probability were formerly surrounded by beds of tufa, which have been decomposed and wasted by the weather, while the needles, being formed of breccia impregnated with iron, have resisted erosive influence. But at Carnac we have no volcanic deposits, while the great regularity of the stones, which are granite, their similarity, and, above all, the manner in which they are set up, with their small end in the ground, entirely disprove the geological hypothesis.

Others contend that the stones were dug out and erected in their present position to clear the ground for agricultural purposes; but here again the disposition of the blocks is fatal to this supposition.

Equally improbable is the opinion advanced by a learned member of the French Institute, that Carnac is the cemetery of the Veneti, who dwelt at Vannes.

A far more plausible theory is that the granite masses were raised in honour of a divinity, or, at least, for the purposes of worship. The earliest and most striking authority for this theory occurs in the 28th chapter of Genesis, where Jacob is represented erecting a stone pillar in honour of Jehovah : “ Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, ‘ Surely the Lord is in this place and I knew it not ; ’ and he was afraid, and said, ‘ How dreadful is this place ! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven ! ’ and Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillow, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it, and he called the name of that place Beth-el.”

The erection of this pillar by the patriarch in honour of God was most probably followed by the setting up of many stones, which were imagined to be symbols of the Divine presence, and this led to the heathen supposition that the stones were animated by the God to whom they were consecrated. The Rev. J. B. Deane, who has devoted much labour to the subject of Druidical temples, observes, with reference to this idea :—“ The rocking-stones of the Druids may have been designed to perpetuate the same superstition, but the notion was extended by vulgar credulity to the stationary pillars of their temples : thus in every country some tale of metamorphosis is invariably connected with

them. It is a common tradition in England that the stones composing the Druidical circles were once human beings, and petrified in the mazes of a dance. Stonehenge was thus called the ‘Dance of the Giants ;’ Rowldrich in Oxfordshire is supposed to have been a king and his nobles ; Stanton Drew in Somersetshire was a company at a wedding ; ‘Long Meg and her Daughters’ in Cumberland, and the ‘Hurlers’ in Cornwall, are immortalized by similar fables. In like manner we read in ancient fables of the stones which danced round Orpheus and Amphion, these being no other than solar circles of the Druidical structure, as may be proved by comparing the account of Pausanias with the ascertained theory of the solar temples.”*

The worship of stones was practised to a great extent in Brittany. Mahé states that a manuscript recording the proceedings of a Council of Nantes, in the seventh century, makes mention of the stone-worship of the Armoricans ; and at a Council of Tours, held in 567, priests were admonished to shut the doors of their churches on all persons worshipping “certain upright stones.”

We cannot therefore doubt that the stones of Carnac form a portion of a temple, or temples, for heathen worship. The sacrificial altars among these stones support this theory ; for the Celts were, as is well known,

* Observations on Dracontia.

in the habit of offering, through their priests, human victims to their gods. Cæsar tells us, that “the whole nation of the Gauls is much addicted to religious observances, and that they employ the Druids to officiate at sacrifices ; for they consider that the favour of the immortal gods cannot be conciliated unless the life of one man be offered up for that of another ; they have also sacrifices of the same kind appointed on behalf of the State.” And Strabo relates that the Celtic Druidesses were authorized to cut the throats of human victims, and pronounce omens according to the manner and direction in which the blood flowed.

There are monuments at Carnac strikingly illustrative of this terrible custom ; one is not only hollowed in such a manner as to receive the body and head of a human victim, but is also provided with channels, which branch off from the trench where the neck is supposed to have been confined, to the exterior of the stone, and which are imagined to have been made to carry off the victim’s blood.

Admitting then that Carnac is a Druidical monument, another question arises—were the stones considered to be the residence of divine intelligence, and worshipped separately, or were they merely portions of one or more temples ?

I have alluded to the vast spaces between the lines

of stones ; but although great depredations have undoubtedly been committed, it is still unlikely that all the areas now unoccupied were formerly covered with stones. Mahé, whose learned and ingenious speculations on Carnac are extremely interesting, accounts for these gaps by citing the recorded tradition that the Druids were in the habit of giving oral instruction in their laws and solemnities, and that they probably assembled for this purpose in unoccupied places near their temples.

Cæsar may be brought forward in support of Mahé's opinion ; alluding to the customs of the Druids, he says, "Ad hos magnus adolescentium numerus disciplinæ eausâ concurrit," and again, "Disputant et juventuti tradunt." The curious and interesting fact may also be cited, that the peasants in La Basse Bretagne continue to teach their children what is called the sacred and mysterious song or poem of the Druids, which they believe was taught in past ages by those people to children.

This is the more remarkable, as they do not pretend to understand the poem,—a confession which will not surprise the reader when he is assured that the meaning is incomprehensible to persons of far higher mental powers than are possessed by Breton peasants.*

* As I am unwilling to ask the reader to believe without evidence,

Among the idolatrous theories connected with Carnac, some assume that the stones belonged originally to one vast Dracontium, or Serpent Temple, consecrated to the god Bel, who was symbolized by the hierogram of the circle and serpent. According to this all the important Druidical monuments in England are only smaller types of the mighty Dracontium of Carnac, the stony folds of which extended at least eight miles, with a breadth so much greater than that of the English temples ; that while these have only two parallel rows of stones, that of Carnac has eleven.

Some persons further allege that the stones of the Carnac monument are so arranged as to represent, by

I annex an extract from this famous chant : it is entitled “*Ar Ranou*,” or “The Series,” and is sung throughout the Departments of Finisterre and Morbihan. The poem commences by supposing a child to be desirous of receiving instruction from a Druid, who says, “Child, beautiful white child, what do you desire ? what shall I sing to thee ?” The child replies, “Sing me the Series of numbers, that I may learn them.” The Druid then, in a set of verses which have sorely puzzled translators, tells the child that there is no series for number one ; that number two is represented by two oxen harnessed to a shell ; number three, three parts of the world, three beginnings, and three terminations, for man as for oaks ; number four, four sharpening stones to sharpen swords ; number five, five zones encompassing the earth ; number six, six little wax children vivified by the moon’s rays, etc. etc. Antiquaries have written learned expositions of this rodomontade, which the curious reader may study in various black-letter books.

the alternation of rows of short and long stones, the wavy lines of a serpent in motion ; but if this reptile was honoured by the people who set up these stones, we may express surprise that the subtle beast should not rather have been portrayed as Milton paints him before his fall,—

“ Not with indented wave,
Prone on the ground, as since, but on his rear,
Circular base of rising folds, that tower'd
Fold above fold, a surging maze, his head
Crested aloft, and carbuncle his eyes ;
With burnish'd neck of verdant gold, erect
Amidst his circling spires.”

In support of this serpent theory, the prevalence of serpent-worship among Pagan nations is brought forward. The hierogram was consecrated throughout Egypt and other Eastern countries, where the serpent is generally represented erect ; and Mexico and the banks of the Mississippi have revealed, in the extraordinary earthworks which have been recently discovered there, undoubted symbols of the worship in olden times of the subtle creature.

Breton traditions also favour the idea that Carnac was a great serpent temple. The word *Hak* or *Ak*, in the old Celtic language, means a serpent ; and thus Carn-Hak would signify, the Serpent's Hill, or mound. Taliessin asserts that the Druid, enumerating his titles, declared, “ I am a Druid,—I am an

architect,—I am a prophet,—I am a serpent ;” and a priest is still called by the Bretons *Belech*, which is considered identical with the Scriptural Balak, or Bel. This analogy is not a little singular, and I may remark that the peasants of Morbihan point still to a tumulus in the Commune of Belz, near Carnac, as the chief seat formerly of the god Bel. A chapel, dedicated to St. Cedo, who enjoys the reputation of having expelled the serpents from this part of Brittany, has been built on the summit of this tumulus. Within the building is a hole which is regarded with superstitious veneration by the peasants, who believe that the ancient oracular response issued from the cavity, and that by thrusting the head within it deafness is cured.

After wandering among the gigantic stones of Le Manaec and Kermario for some hours, I walked to Carnac. The church of this village is very interesting. The porch is surmounted by a curious species of open crown, carved by a Carnac stonemason out of a single block from the Druidical remains.

Preparations were making for a religious *fête*, which was to be held on the following day in honour of St. Cornely, the patron of the church, who holds a high place in the religious affections of the Bretons. A brisk sale of wonderful representations of his saintship in his capacity of protector of cattle, glowing

with the gaudiest colours, was carried on before the church-doors ; and many peasants of both sexes were displaying their devotion and religious enthusiasm by going round the church on their knees.

Besides these might be seen several old crones, who however contrived to shuffle over the stony ground with greater speed than their neighbours. On inquiry I was informed that they were paid for their labour by persons who, being unwilling to do personal penance, enjoyed the comfortable belief that prayers said on their behalf would have great weight with St. Cornely.

I now drove to Plouharnel, about two miles east of Carnac, near the head of the long peninsula of Quiberon. Leaving the carriage on the road, I walked across the plain to visit two very large Dolmens, one of which is forty-five feet long, and is covered by three stones of great size.* Two gold collars, some celts, glass beads, and other objects, including a human thigh-bone, were recently found in the largest of these monuments. One of the collars, and the other articles, may be seen in a neighbouring house, and are well worth examination.

* The tourist who is curious in these antiquities should not omit, if he returns home by the Loire, pausing at Saumur, to visit the Dolmen about a mile from that town. It is one of the largest Druidical remains in existence, consisting of eighteen huge slabs, forming a hall eighty feet long, twenty-four broad, and seven high.

I devoted the remaining hours of daylight to a ramble among the lines of Erdeven, which rival those of Le Manaec in the grandeur of the stones ; they are of great size, and extend in an almost unbroken easterly direction for one mile and three furlongs. The avenues, when viewed near, appear straight, but seen from the summit of the neighbouring tumulus their sinuosity is very apparent. Many of the stones in this part of Carnac present a rounded appearance, and are much larger at the top than at the base. This form, which is too frequent and regular to be accidental, is ascribed by the peasantry to the gradual wearing away of the stone by cattle rubbing against it ; but as no cattle in the Morbihan are reputed to have been colossal, and as those of the present day are certainly not taller than their race in other countries, it is clear that they could not have worn the granite at an altitude of twelve and sometimes fifteen feet. The hypothesis that the moulded appearance of these stones is due to the wasting effect of time, is equally unsatisfactory.

Seated on a prostrate block among the loftiest stones, which were bedded in heath, purple beneath the setting sun, and hoary with long moss, I spent the fading evening hours watching the lengthening shadows slowly creeping to the east until the plain became ribbed with eleven dark lines. Then, as gloom

fell upon the scene, and the mighty stones, now shadowless, stood out from the earth like long grey tongues, which seemed as if they could talk of the past, feelings too deep for utterance stirred me, and I thought, while contrasting the period when the huge blocks around me were set up, by a people who walked in darkness, with the present age, illuminated by the light of Christianity, that the visitor to Carnac might exclaim with the patriarch of old, “Surely the Lord is in this place.”





Stones of Carnac.

CHAPTER XVI.

EXCURSION TO LOC-MARIA-KER.—HIRE ‘LA BELLE JEANNETTE.’—PICTURESQUE SAIL.—CRACH.—FLEET OF FISHING-BOATS.—ENTER THE SEA OF MORBIHAN.—LAND ON GAVR’-INNIS.—INTERESTING CROMLECH.—CURIOS SCULPTURES.—ISLE AUX MOINES.—WILD LEGENDS.—ST. GILDAS DE RHUYS.—ABÉLARD.—LEGEND OF HÉLOÏSE.—CURIOS BALLAD.—DREDGE FOR OYSTERS.—EXCELLENCE OF THE MORBIHAN OYSTERS.—KNOWN TO THE ROMANS.—SAIL TO LOC-MARIA-KER.—NUMEROUS CELTIC REMAINS.—DARIORIGUM.—LARGE DOLMEN.—IMMENSE MENHIR.—SPECULATIONS.—MYSTERIOUS SCULPTURES.—BELZ.—RETURN TO AURAY.

ALTHOUGH a day on the plains of Carnac will give you a very impressive idea of the magnitude of the Celtic remains in the Department of the Morbihan, yet you must visit Loc-Maria-Ker to fully realize the extraordinary labours of that mysterious people who

raised such mighty and puzzling monuments on the barren shores of this remote part of France.

Not that Brittany alone was selected by the Gaulish Celts for their stone temples ; but a satisfactory explanation of the amazing number of these monuments in Brittany is found in the fact that when Charlemagne, in his anxiety to uproot Paganism throughout his dominions, ordered all Celtic structures for the purposes of worship to be destroyed, his commands were very generally carried out in all parts of France but Brittany, which province was never completely subdued by him ; and subsequently, when the Council of Nantes enacted a canon for the especial destruction of Pagan stones in southern Brittany, the order seems to have been only obeyed in the dioceses of Nantes and Rennes.

My intention to visit Loc-Maria-Ker having become known to the boatmen of Auray, one of their fraternity came to me respecting the trip. He was a huge fellow, with long shaggy hair and rough exterior, but his weather-worn features had an honest expression that promised well.

After much talking, for a Breton is not quick in striking a bargain, he engaged to convey me in his boat, ‘La Belle Jeannette’—which, with its equipage of six persons, was, as he assured me, capable of braving the Atlantic—to Loc-Maria-Ker and bring me

baek, for ten franes, and for two more he was willing to enter the Sea of Morbihan, or at least make the attempt, and land me on Gâvr'-Innis. This was so much less a sum than I expected to pay, considering that the trip would occupy the whole day and that I was to have the serviees of six persons, that I closed at once with the offer ; and I may mention, as illustrative of the cheapness of Brittany, that my boatman was willing to hire his boat for less than ten franes on other days, but the day on which I purposcd going to Loc-Maria-Ker being one of the oyster-fishing days, he required to be paid for losing his fishing by hiring his boat to me.

A French gentleman, the only tourist that I met in Brittany, expressed a desire to accompany me ; but when he found that I was very desirous to enter the Sea of Morbihan, which bears an ugly reputation for its rough waters and extremely difficult navigation, he hesitated. The sturdy boatman, with the view of inspiring the timid gentleman with confidence in ‘La Belle Jeannette’ and in his seamanship, assured him that she had weathered a storm gallantly in that sea two months before, when he and an enterprising English tourist, who was desirous of seeing the Morbihan Islands, were obliged to remain out all night ; but the French gentleman declared that he would not go ; adding, that Englishmen were proverbially

fond of the sea, but, for his part, he had no love for sailing on salt or even fresh water: so I had not the pleasure of his companionship in ‘La Belle Jeannette.’

The morning for my proposed trip broke most auspiciously, giving every promise of ripening to a glorious day. According to appointment I was on the quay at the head of the little harbour of Auray at seven o’clock. Thinking of pleasant water-excursions at home, in gaily-painted boats with white sails and cushioned seats, I was somewhat disconcerted to find that my bargain of the preceding evening made me master for the day of a huge tub-like craft, rigged schooner-fashion, redolent of fishy odours, and having for crew two men, a boy, and three sturdy women, who, judging by the muscular development of their arms and legs, would have been formidable antagonists in a wrestling match.

The fittings of ‘La Belle Jeannette’ were of a most primitive character, but what was wanting in elegance was made up by great solidity; and my attention was drawn to the half-deck cabin at the bows, filled with clean straw, which the boatman declared would prove extremely comfortable if fate ordained that we should be obliged to pass the night in the Sea of Morbihan.

We were of course provided with provisions, which

I was assured would be increased by the welcome addition of oysters, the dredge for their capture being on board. Having been handed to a seat in the stern by the female portion of my crew, the hawser was cast off, and ‘La Belle Jeannette’ floated down with the tide, which had just commenced ebbing.

The picturesque banks of the estuary, extending from Auray to the sea, are so high near the town that the strong breeze blowing above was unavailing to us; accordingly my sturdy crew put out the huge sweeps and pulled vigorously. Thus assisted, and having the tide in our favour, we glided down the stream,—now drifting into quick eddies, and now floating into broad pools and bays canopied by spreading trees,

“Drooping their beauty o'er the watery clearness,
To woo their lovely image into nearness,”—

until, when about three miles from Auray, the expansion of the estuary and the less lofty banks permitted the wind to crisp the water. The welcome command was now given to hoist sail, and, under the influence of a spanking breeze from the west, the unwieldy ‘Jeannette’ soon gave evidence, by the foam which creamed round her bows, that the wind was tugging away at her sails.

The scenery as far as Crach, halfway between Auray and Loc-Maria-Ker, is extremely beautiful: precipi-

tous rocks, crowned by woods and glowing with brilliant-hued lichens, confine the waters, which here and there reflect the *tourelle* of a picturesque château or ancient *manoir*.

Near Crach we fell in with upwards of a hundred fishing-boats, lying in a bay, waiting for a signal-gun to unfold their wings and speed to the oyster-beds opposite the entrance to the Sea of Morbihan. The excellence of the Armorican oysters was well known to the Romans. Ausonius says,—

“Sunt et Armorici qui laudent ostrea ponti ;”

and there is every reason to believe that the Morbihan oysters played a very important part in the feasts of Lucullus and Apicius, the latter of whom is said to have discovered a method of preserving this shell-fish perfectly fresh for a long time.

The Morbihan oysters retain their fame, and draw a great number of boats from various places on the coast to the banks where they are found. The fishery, which is very extensive, is under rigid regulations. Tuesday and Thursday in each week during the season are set apart for fishing. On these days the Superintendent of the fishery proceeds to the Bay of Crach, and hoists his flag on board a Government cutter. At two o'clock, by which time all the boats have arrived at the scene of action, a gun is fired, to announce that the fishery has opened; and at four

o'clock a second gun gives notice that it has closed; two hours being the time allowed each day. This may seem a brief period; but although the oyster-banks are very extensive, the boats are so numerous that if a longer time were allowed the oysters would soon disappear. The sum paid for the privilege of fishing is fifteen sous per month. The fishing-boats are small but stout, and are worked by one man and two women; the former casting the dredge, while the latter pick out the oysters and throw the weeds and unprofitable shell-fish into the sea. We passed the fleet of boats before they spread their sails, but just as we arrived abreast of Loc-Maria-Ker the signal-gun was fired, and they dashed after us.

The wind, which had been rising steadily, now blew very freshly from the south-west. This was highly favourable for entering the Sea of Morbihan; and I was rejoiced to find that my boatman was willing to make the attempt, though he predicted it would prove an arduous undertaking. The difficulty in passing into this sea while the tide is running down arises from the circumstance that the body of water, which gives its name of Morbihan (the Breton for "Little Sea") to this Department of France, has but one narrow outlet. Through this the tide, which rises here to a considerable height, flows with great swiftness and force, dashing against the rocks with such impetuosity

as to wreath them with foam, while the reverberation caused by the sea in the rock-caverns is heard at a great distance.

Taking advantage of the back-water, our boat, impelled by the strong breeze, made good way until she was caught by an eddy, which span her round as if she had been a piece of cork, and finally sent her reeling down the foaming waters to the entrance of the Strait. This was repeated three times ; and although at first rather amusing than otherwise, I began to fear that we should either have to wait for a flowing tide or abandon the attempt to enter the Morbihan. Petrarch's words,

“Quante speranze se ne porta il vento !”

apply with peculiar force to this boat-excursion, presuming you are unassisted by tide or steam ; but my crew, women included, were very determined, and at length, after skilful navigation, they contrived to get ‘La Belle Jeannette’ up the water-hill formed by the rushing tide passing through the Strait.

But although we were now in the Morbihan, it was by no means easy to land upon the islands. These, which are said to be as numerous as the days in the year, are for the most part very small, and a fierce tide was rushing between them. Now indeed I became aware of the necessity of having a stout boat to battle with the troubled waters ; and remembering

the possibility of having to pass the night upon them, I was well pleased to hear that ‘La Belle Jeannette’ was, as her owner said, *brave* in a storm.

At length she was brought within a little creek, and I had the satisfaction of landing on Gâvr'-Innis, or Goat’s Island. Climbing over huge rocks, draped with slippery seaweed, which fringed the little island, I followed my boatman, who was acquainted with the position of the cromlech, the object of my visit; but indeed no guide is necessary. The island, which is composed of granite, upon which a tumulus has been raised, is not more than eighty feet high, and the cromlech is within a few feet of the summit. The entrance, facing the west, consists of a low narrow gallery ten feet long, requiring the visitor to crawl through it on hands and knees. Beyond this the cromlech expands to a large chamber running east and west. The bottom, sides, and top of this are composed, with one exception, of huge granite slabs, the exceptional case being a block of pure quartz. The largest superficial stone is twenty-three feet long and eighteen broad. Besides the singular locality of this mysterious monument, it is additionally curious from the circumstance that nearly all the stones forming the sides have their interior surfaces covered with fantastic sculptures, which bear considerable resemblance to the designs in tattooing.

Those who believe that the monuments on the Morbihan islands, as well as those at Carnac, were consecrated to ophiolatry, are pleased to find that these carvings include serpentine figures. Occasional deep arrow-headed cuttings are also apparent, which have been supposed to be cuneiform characters. But in opposition to this idea, it must be remembered that the Druids (if this be a Druidical monument) were especially careful to leave no written records behind them, trusting to oral communications for the propagation of their religion.*

In the middle of the second stone on the south side from the end of the chamber, two rings or handles have been carved, sufficiently large and deep to enable the hand and arm to be passed through them. The interior surfaces of these rings are highly polished, apparently by friction, but in what manner and for what purpose this was applied is equally mysterious.

Bearing in mind the customs of the Druids, the idea naturally arises that human beings intended to be sacrificed were chained to these handles ; but although the most searching examination has been made in the chamber and surrounding ground, no vestige of bones or cinders has been discovered.

* Breton peasants believe that whoever has the good fortune to decipher these hieroglyphics will possess the key to the hidden treasures of the Druids.

The supposition is however in some measure confirmed by the fact that, in the Isle aux Moines at the head of the Morbihan, a sacrificial Dolmen has been found with channels in the stone branching from the cavity where it is supposed the bodies of human victims were laid.

Provided with lights, which the visitor should not forget to bring with him, I examined the interior of the cromlech very minutely, and copied some of the most remarkable sculptures. Then, crawling out, I ascended to the summit of the tumulus, from whence I enjoyed a wide range of vision over the Morbihan and the numerous wild and singular islands.

It is greatly to be regretted that these have not been properly explored; many contain traces of Celtic remains, leading to the inference that monuments similar to that on Gâvr'-Innis exist on other islands. Indeed it is highly probable that the people who constructed that stupendous and very curious cromlech raised similar monuments elsewhere. The vast size of the stones composing the Gâvr'-Innis Cromlech, and the presence of the quartz block, a stone foreign to the island, evince that the constructors were masters of considerable mechanical art; for if the Morbihan islands were washed in their days by the same angry tide which now chafes the surrounding rocks, the landing of a block of stone, weighing many

tons, upon the steep shores of Gâvr'-Innis, must have been a difficult and arduous task.

The Morbihan, as may be supposed, from its wild nature, abounds with legends. The scanty population, who are mostly employed in fishing, are extremely superstitious. As Mahé justly observes, their lives are so full of bitter realities that their imaginations revel in an ideal world; and Souvestre says that "the Morbihan peasant is a baptized Celt, whose origin is more apparent than that of any other Breton. In no other part of Brittany is the Druidical mythology better preserved under a thin veil of Christianity. There is not a Druidical monument that does not inspire the peasant with superstitious veneration."

The terrible rocks fringing the Morbihan coast, which the restless waters have worn into strange jagged forms, and the dark caves through whose windings the storm-blast shrieks and moans, are believed to be the favourite abode of wicked spirits called *Bolbiguéandets*, who take especial delight in vexing the deep and causing shipwrecks. These calamities are announced to the families of the unfortunate mariners by the sound of falling water round their beds. Another very general superstition is the belief in the Ankheu, which exceeds the Irish Banshee in power, as it not only foretells but inflicts death; so when a man falls from a ladder by his own carelessness, he

will seriously tell you that he was not in fault, for that his Ankheu overthrew him.

I was very anxious to visit some of the neighbouring wild islands, but being warned that "time and tide wait for no man," and that with an opposing current and contrary wind we might have to remain all night out, I regained 'La Belle Jeannette,' and, favoured by the still ebbing tide, we were soon beyond the troubled waters of the Morbihan. Such however was the force of the tide, that we were carried a long way down the estuary of Loc-Maria-Ker before we could make headway. This seaward progress brought us within view of the peninsula of St. Gildas de Rhuys, surmounted by the largest tumulus in Brittany. Not far from this Abélard spent some years of his unquiet life. The monastery, of which he was the abbot, has long ceased to exist, but the site where it stood is pointed out. The monks over whom he presided were noted for their dissolute habits, and when Abélard, who at this time was atoning for his past sins, endeavoured to reform the cowled savages of St. Gildas, they attempted to murder him. "Often in my prayers," he says, alluding to his life at this wild spot, "have I cried unto the Lord from this end of the earth in the anguish of my soul. For great was the misery with which I was tormented by day and night by that undisciplined congregation of

brethren. Perils continually beset my body and soul. If I attempted to make them observe that rule of life which they professed, they sought to kill me ; and if I did not perform my duty to the utmost of my power, I incurred damnation. Satan hath cast so many obstacles in my way that no place can I find wherein to rest in quiet or live in safety, but wandering and fugitive am I driven about, as if the curse of Cain were upon me.”

It is very remarkable that the fair and frail Héloïse, who is generally remembered only as having

“ Loved not wisely, but too well,”

should have been metamorphosed by the Bretons into a malignant and frightful witch. It appears that the reputation of her great erudition had such an effect on the ignorant peasantry, that, being unable to understand how a woman could be so learned as she was by any natural laws, they accounted for her knowledge (to their satisfaction at least) by pronouncing her allied to the powers of darkness. This strange belief gave rise to a curious ballad, in which Héloïse is made to confess how her learning made her a witch :—

“ When I left my father’s home to follow my beloved Abélard, I only knew how to pray to thee, O my God !

Now I am learned, I am instructed in everything ; I can read the Evangelists ; I can consecrate the Host as well as the priests ; I know where to find pure gold,—gold in ashes, silver in sand ;

I can at will become a black bitch, a crow, a will-o'-the-wisp, a dragon ;
 I know a song which rends the heavens, rocks the sea, and shakes the earth ;
 I know all that has been known, all that will be known, all that can be known.
 The first incantation with my beloved Abélard was made with the left eye of a crow and the heart of a toad ;
 Three vipers are sitting on a dragon's egg ; if all goes well with my dragon, there will be desolation ;
 If all goes well with my dragon, there will be great desolation ; he will belch flames seven leagues around him.
 'Tis not with the flesh of partridge nor with that of woodcocks that I feed my vipers, but with the sacred blood of innocent infants :
 The first babe that I killed was in the priest's arms, on the point of being baptized.
 Two or three years more, and then my dear friend and myself will have turned the world upside down."

Villemarqué, from whose 'Chants Populaires de la Bretagne' this ballad is taken, supposes, with great probability, that the author has confounded Héloïse, who lived some years at Pallet near Nantes, where she gave birth to a child,* with the Druidical priestesses established in a college on one of the wild islands

* A grotto exists at Pallet which bears the name of Héloïse, and in which tradition states she spent many of her unhappy days. The following inscription is engraved over the entrance :—

“ Héloïse peut-être erra sur ce rivage
 Quand, aux yeux des jaloux dérobant sou séjour,
 Dans les murs du Pallet elle vint mettre au jour
 Un fils, cher et malheureux gage

at the mouth of the Loire, whose mysterious observances caused them to be regarded as superhuman. Villemarqué adds, that the ballad is sung in four different Breton dialects, but that nowhere is it better known than in the district where Abélard endeavoured to rule the licentious monks of St. Gildas de Rhuys. The presumed origin of the ballad is strong evidence of the traditional power of Druidism over the imaginative minds of the Morbihan Bretons.

When abreast of Loc-Maria-Ker, we sailed into the midst of the fishing-fleet, now hard at work upon the oyster-beds. Selecting a favourable locality, the sails were reefed so as to allow our boat to glide gently through the waters, and the dredge cast overboard. Glorious, most glorious were the brilliant-hued shells which, among a heap of grey-coated oysters, were tumbled into the boat,—bivalves and univalves, lovely forms with hard names, among which the sea anemones were particularly beautiful. A capacious aquarium might have been peopled with the produce

De ces plaisirs furtifs et de son tendre amour.

Peut-être en ce réduit sauvage

Seule, plus d'une fois, elle vint soupirer

Et goûter librement la douceur de pleurer;

Peut-être, sur ce roc assise,

Elle rêvait à son malheur !

J'y veux rêver aussi, j'y veux remplir mon cœur

Du doux souvenir d'Héloïse."

of a single haul ; while a multitude of shells with delicate spires and whorls,

“ Void of the little living will,”

set imagination to picture the tiny inhabitant of each varied shell :—

“ Did he stand at the diamond door
Of his house in a rainbow frill ?
Did he push, when he was uncurl’d,
A golden foot or a fairy horn
Through his dim water-world ?”

But although these exquisite forms charmed the eye, I must confess that the oysters, which my female crew opened with great dexterity, found equal favour with me. Lucullus did wisely in sending to Armorica for his oysters, but he would have done better had he gone to the Morbihan to eat them—they are delicious. It may be that I was very hungry ; but as I sat, like the lawyer in the fable, between my two stout oyster-openers, devouring the fish, I thought that I had seldom eaten such excellent oysters : fresher, assuredly never. How long I should or could have kept pace with the liberal supplies forced upon me was beginning to be a serious consideration, when the report of a cannon announced that the hour for closing the fishery had arrived. With an obedience highly creditable to the fishers, the dredges were immediately shipped, and the little fleet, spreading their wings, flew up the estuary to their morning rendez-

vous in Crach Bay, where numerous large luggers were moored, waiting to purchase their cargoes. The price of the oysters delivered to these luggers, or at the harbour of Auray, averages twelve sous per hundred.

We now steered for the jetty above Loc-Maria-Ker, and disembarking I accompanied my boatman across the country in the direction of the village. Here a guide is necessary, for the Celtic remains are spread over a large area, and much time would be lost in finding the most remarkable monuments. The antiquary will of course consider all worth visiting, but they are so numerous that it would require more than a day to examine them attentively. Indeed it is apparent that the wild coast of Loc-Maria-Ker was as favourite an abode of the Druids as Carnac; and we are therefore led to the conclusion that the religious or other ceremonies practised by that people were observed throughout the peninsula extending between the two towns. The whole of this country is granitic, and thus presents great natural advantages for the erection of stone monuments.

It is remarkable how Christianity has set her seal upon these former strongholds of Paganism. Loc-Maria-Ker, signifying the place of the Virgin Mary, possesses as well as Carnac a remarkably fine church, which is regarded with great veneration by the peo-

santry. The classical visitor will be interested to know that Loc-Maria-Ker is supposed by many antiquaries to stand on the site of Dariorigum, the capital of the Venites. Tradition, unsupported by historical evidence, assigns the construction of a tumulus near the town to Cæsar, whose name it bears ; but, as is well known, hundreds of monuments have this ubiquitous name attached to them without any sufficient historical authority.

If the serried ranks of stones at Carnac strike us with amazement from their number, the monuments at Loc-Maria-Ker are equally astonishing from their prodigious size. The first I visited was a Dolmen of vast extent, situated about a quarter of a mile from the water. The top is formed of three stones ; the largest, which is unfortunately cracked, is twenty-nine feet long, sixteen feet four inches broad, and one foot eight inches thick. Beyond this, on a gentle slope commanding an extensive view of the Morbihan, and the great natural pier of St. Gildas which separates that sea from the Atlantic, are the remains of the largest known Menhir, sixty-one feet four inches long and thirty-three feet four inches in circumference at the base. It has been broken into four fragments, which, with one exception, fit so accurately and are in such close juxtaposition as to leave no doubt of their having been originally one stone.

The exception applies to the base, which has fallen nearly at right angles to the other fragments, having apparently made half a revolution on its axis while falling; this is very remarkable, and leads to the supposition that the destruction of this magnificent monolith was caused by lightning or earthquake; for although the early evangelizers of Brittany destroyed many Celtic monuments, which, whether right or wrong, they associated with Paganism, yet, ignoring the force of gunpowder, we are at a loss to understand how they could have twisted the base of the obelisk into its present remarkable position. True, the setting up of such a pillar, computed to weigh two hundred and sixty tons, is even more perplexing and astonishing than the manner in which it has been destroyed, and, in the absence of machinery, we must presume that it could only have been erected by a vast amount of human force. The obelisk at Rome,—which, although fifteen feet longer than that at Loc-Maria-Ker, weighs only one hundred and fifty tons,—required according to Fontana, with all the advantages of mechanical science, nearly nine hundred men and seventy horses to raise it, and the cost of the operation amounted to 120,000 francs.

Some persons explain the raising of the great Loc-Maria-Ker Menhir, by declaring that the Druids knew the art of making artificial stone, which has

perished with them ; but this supposition will not bear mineralogical investigation, and is indeed only worthy of mention for its absurdity.

The purpose of this gigantic monolith has of course been as great a subject of speculation as the manner in which it was raised.

Learned archæologists contend that it was erected to mark the resting-place of a great chief. The habit of placing pillars over the graves of mighty men is supposed to have grown out of the custom of planting an upright spear at the head of sleeping chiefs. Thus we read that David found Saul “sleeping within the trench, and his spear stuck in the ground at his bolster.” Substituting the more durable stone, as symbolical of the sleep of death, it is supposed that some valiant chief was buried in the large tumulus near Loc-Maria-Ker, and that the obelisk in question was set up to his honour : Ossian’s poems support this theory. In more than one place allusion is made to the erection of long stones over the graves of chiefs ; thus, in Temora, we read that “a stone was raised on high to speak to future times, with its grey head of moss,” of the valour of the departed chief buried beneath ; and Grégoire de Rostrenen, in his Celtic dictionary, relates that a lofty Menhir was overthrown near Quimper, beneath which a skull was found in a large basin.

But on the other hand there is strong evidence, as I have shown, that monoliths were erected for worship; and when we remember that the huge obelisk of Loc-Maria-Ker is at the east end of the extensive monuments of Carnac, which there is every reason to believe formerly extended nearly to its base, the conjecture becomes strengthened that this may have been the principal type of the great Divinity of that mysterious people, who engrafted their superstitious belief in stones on the setting up of the pillar by the patriarch Jacob.

This supposition, I confess, seems to me very plausible, and acquires additional probability by the fact that there is a stupendous Dolmen within a few yards of the prostrate monolith. The roof of this structure consists of one stone, eighteen feet long and twelve feet eight inches wide, supported on the pointed extremities of three upright stones, nearly similar in size. A flint knife and a large quantity of cinders were found within the Dolmen; and this fact, taken in connection with the circumstance that two of the stones are rudely sculptured, leads to the inference that this monument was devoted to sacrificial, or, at all events, worshipping purposes.

The sculptures are extremely curious and mysterious, and have given rise to much ingenious speculation respecting their meaning. Some resemble

those within the Gâvr'-Innis monument, but differ from them in execution, as they are raised upon the stones.

Deprived as we are, when examining the monuments of Carnac, of any assistance from the lights of history, we are naturally very much tempted to indulge in speculations, many of which are doubtless as wild and unfounded as the legends to which the Bretons cling with hereditary fondness. But if we incline to the belief that the stones of Carnac—and by this expression I desire to include all the monuments studding the vast plain extending from Belz to Loc-Maria-Ker, a distance of nearly thirteen miles—formed originally a great heathen temple, then it is extremely probable that the east end of the main avenue was purposely terminated by a gigantic obelisk, which, among the serried ranks of stones, was the first and last to catch the rays of the rising and setting sun.

There is another prostrate obelisk, twenty-five feet long, called by the peasants, *La Tranche de Beurre*, and several Dolmens near Loc-Maria-Ker, but they present no extraordinary features of interest beyond increasing, by their vast dimensions, our wonder respecting the people who erected them. Do not however fail to visit the excavations recently made by a coast-guard-man in the village. They have revealed undoubted vestiges of Roman work. Besides a por-

tion of marble pavement, traces of a road may be distinctly seen, and foundations of brick walls.

Such a find as this in England would have been speedily followed by the inquisitive labours of Archaeological Societies, and we should probably have the vexed question respecting the site of Dariorigum set at rest. But in France they are less zealous in such matters; and a box placed by the coast-guardman near the excavations, inscribed "*Pour le Travailleur;*" shows that he looks to the offerings of visitors for the means of continuing his labours.

I regretted that I was unable to devote some hours to the examination of these excavations, but our chance of reaching Auray before night depended on immediate embarkation. Accordingly we resumed our voyage, and as the shades of evening were falling, arrived at the head of the small harbour.



HOUSES IN MONTAUBAN.

CHAPTER XVII.

EXCURSION TO ST. ANNE D'AURAY.—ANGLING AND SKETCHING.—A MIRACULOUS IMAGE.—THE BISHOP OF VANNES.—THE SAILOR'S CANTICLE.—THE CHARTREUSE.—THE QUIBERON EXPEDITION.—THE BLOOD OF HEROES.—BURIAL CUSTOMS.—THE BATTLE OF AURAY.—DUGUESCLIN'S TABLETS.—THE PET HARE.—THE ORDER OF THE ERMINE.—THE COMBAT OF THE THIRTY.—MERLIN'S PROPHECY.—THE RIVAL INNS.—THE LEGEND OF COMMORE.—BARBE-BLEU OF LOWER BRITTANY.—THE MIRACULOUS RESURRECTION.—ST. GILDAS.—LEPERS IN BRITTANY.—THE KAGOUS.—CURIOSIT TRADITION.

ALTHOUGH the Celtic monuments of Carnac will always receive, as they undoubtedly command, the

principal attention of the tourist while abiding in the Morbihan, yet, if he has time to spare, an excursion to St. Anne d'Auray will prove interesting.

I visited this place the morning after my return from Loc-Maria-Ker. The walk, about three miles, lies through pleasant fields by the side of the brawling Brech, which sets numerous old mills in motion, each a picture in a lovely frame of verdure. Being provided with rod and pencil, I was sorely perplexed to choose between the two; for while picturesque mills, with their clacking wheels, seemed to woo me to sketch them,

“The pools beneath them, never still,”

in which lusty trouts took their pleasure, were an equal allurement to discard the pencil for the rod. So alternately sketching and fishing I strolled up the valley for about three miles, and then striking across the country in an easterly direction, arrived at the principal object of my pilgrimage.

The shrine of Sainte-Anne d'Auray is one of the most venerated in the Morbihan. A miraculous legend attaches to the statue of the Lady, which is visited annually by many thousands of superstitious Bretons.

The story runs that the sacred image was placed, on the introduction of Christianity into the Morbihan, in a small chapel in the village of Ker Anna (the Place of Anne), that it remained there an ob-

ject of great veneration for nine centuries, and then suddenly disappeared.

Such was the state of things when, in the fourteenth century, a farmer, having occasion to plough some land in the vicinity of Ker Anna, found, greatly to his surprise, that all his endeavours to pass the plough through a particular portion of the ground were futile. The oxen evinced the greatest terror when they approached the spot, and two ploughs were broken in the attempt to turn the soil.

The mysterious circumstance having been noised abroad, the Bishop of Vannes ordered the ground to be searched. This was done, and a statue was discovered a few feet below the surface of the earth, which had not been broken by the plough; and, that there might be no misapprehension respecting the sacred nature of the image, a brilliant aureole streamed from it, and the words “*Sainte Anne*” were seen glowing on the brow.

This miraculous recovery of the lost statue had the effect of investing it with fresh renown, and causing the image to be more reverenced than it had been before its disappearance. At the suggestion of the Bishop of Vannes and his clergy it was set up within a temporary shrine, provided with boxes conveniently placed to receive the offerings of the faithful; and in a short time the gifts were so numerous and costly as to en-

able a church to be built worthy to receive the holy image. The foundation-stone of the building, which is that now seen, was laid with great pomp and solemnity in the presence of thirty thousand pilgrims: and when the edifice was completed, the priests who established themselves within the golden influence of St. Anne's image were under the necessity of constructing covered galleries to shelter the crowds of pilgrims who flocked to the shrine of the profitable saint.

If you are unwilling to credit the history of this image, which certainly requires considerable strength of imagination, the fine church is a proof that the legend has had many believers. Monarchs and princes have bent their steps, like more humble devotees, to the shrine of the miraculous image, laying at the same time rich offerings at her feet. Henrietta of England and Marie Antoinette are registered as having contributed largely to the Saint's earthly glory. But these costly presents were unfortunately fatal to the church and image. The former was plundered at the Revolution; and the latter was deshrined, carried to Vannes, and committed to the flames, a portion of the head alone escaping destruction. This fragment is preserved within the pedestal of the new statue, which, if the veneration of pilgrims be any test, seems to be esteemed as holy as the old image.

St. Anne, or, as she is generally called, Sainte-Anne

d'Auray, is the especial patroness of sailors in this part of Morbihan. The church contains numerous *ex voto* offerings, deposited in gratitude for preservation from shipwreck.

When sailors go in procession to St. Auray, they are in the habit of singing a long canticle, entitled ‘*Vœu des Marins à Sainte-Anne d’Auray.*’ The following lines will give the reader an idea of the love entertained by Breton sailors for this Saint. The original is in the Morbihan Breton dialect; a French translation, made by the Abbé Guillaume, an eminent Celtic scholar, affords pretty strong evidence of the encouragement given by priests to this unscriptural love for saints.

“Bonne Sainte-Anne ! ô céleste patronne !
Ce que tu veux le Seigneur te le donne ;
Protège tes Bretons combattans pour la Foi ;
Nos bénédicitions s’élèveront vers toi.

“Si nos marins, dans nos maisons joyeuses,
Reviennent tous vers leurs mères heureuses,
Oh ! nous te promettons de venir avec eux,
De venir chaque année ici l’offrir nos vœux.”

On my way back to Auray I visited the Chartreuse, a nunnery of “Sœurs de la Sagesse,” who deem it wise to shut out the world and spend their lives within the narrow confines of convent walls. The Chartreuse stands near the Champ des Martyrs, where the unfortunate and ill-advised persons who served in the

disastrous Quiberon expedition were shot. A small temple has been erected at one end of the field, with the short but touching inscription over the entrance—

“ HIC CECIDERUNT.”

I was surprised to see numerous little wax representations of legs and arms suspended round the walls of the chapel, which has no miraculous healing image to attract devotees. Inquiring the cause, I was informed that mothers are in the habit of dragging their children afflicted by infirmity over the grass of the adjoining field, believing that, as it was steeped in the blood of heroes, contact with it will strengthen the weak limbs of their children. Truly if the railway, which is the annihilator of ancient habits, destroys, by invading Brittany, much that is picturesque, it will at the same time root out terrible superstitions, which belong more to the age of darkness than to the nineteenth century.

Some enthusiastic Republican has written the word “Liberté” in huge letters on one of the walls, which has called forth the following rejoinder from Victor Hugo’s poem :—

“ O Dieu ! leur liberté, c’était un monstre immense,
Se nommant vérité parce qu’il était nu,
Balbutiant les cris de l’aveugle démence
Et l’aveu du vice ingénú !”

A *Chapelle Expiatoire*, in very bad taste, has been

erected near the Chartreuse; over the entrance are the words "LA FRANCE EN PLEURS L'A ÉLEVÉ," and the interior contains numerous inscriptions of this nature:—"Quiberon, Juillet 21, 1795. Indignement immolés pour Dieu et pour le Roi. La mort des justes est précieuse devant Dieu." "Vous recevrez une grande gloire et un nom éternel."

It speaks well for the Morbihan peasantry, that not one could be found to carry out the sentence of the Military Commission which condemned the Royalists, among whom was the Bishop of Dol and numerous emigrants, to be shot by companies of fifty; the butchery was effected by Parisians, who volunteered for the service.

A cemetery attached to the *Chapelle Expiatoire* is a favourite burial-place of the inhabitants of the neighbourhood. The tombstones, and more humble graves marked merely by the heaving sod, were festooned and covered by numerous *immortelles* and withered wild flowers. The latter placed on graves, in the south of Brittany, denote the resting-place of maidens who have died in the month of May, the custom being, on the recurrence of that month, for the relations and friends of the deceased girl to strew flowers upon her grave, which are supposed to be emblematic of her purity. A very touching and pathetic Breton ballad, entitled 'Bleunion Mae,' or 'The Flowers of May,'

is still sung in the Cornouaille and Vannes districts on the occasion of the death of a beloved daughter, who, according to the ballad, will assuredly at the day of resurrection pass from death to eternal life from amidst the flowers covering her grave.

Villemarqué conceives that Shakspeare was indebted to Breton customs for many of the charming passages in his Plays, and cites the following lines from ‘Cymbeline’ as an example:—

“ With fairest flowers,
Whilst summer lasts and I live here, Fidele,
I'll sweeten thy sad grave. Thou shalt not lack
The flower that's like thy face, pale primrose; nor
The azured harebell, like thy veins; no, nor
The leaf of eglantine, whom not to slander,
Out-sweeten'd not thy breath.”

On my return to Auray I visited the locality where, according to good and trustworthy historical evidence, the famous battle was fought which gave Brittany to the Montforts. Daru in his ‘*Histoire de la Bretagne*’ says, alluding to this contest, “ It was not merely the dispute of a province, it was the struggle of two mighty empires, for the hatred of France and England had been renewed. These rival nations drew numerous allies into the war. On the side of Charles of Blois were seen the Dukes of Normandy, Burgundy, and Lorraine, the King of Navarre, the Duke of Athens, and Spanish and Genoese auxiliaries.

Montfort, on his side, counted among the defenders of his cause the King of England, Edward III., Robert d'Artois, brother-in-law of the King of France, German mercenaries, and the greater part of the towns of Brittany. The nobility was divided between the two competitors; but, according to the expression of Froissart, Charles of Blois had always on his side five out of seven. Such was the state of affairs when the decisive and bloody battle of Auray was fought. Six thousand persons fell. Charles was killed in hot fight, and the famous Duguesclin made prisoner.

It is curious evidence of the superstition of that period (the middle of the fourteenth century), that Duguesclin attributed his capture to his having unfortunately forgotten to consult the mystic calendar compiled by his wife, which warned him to avoid exposing himself to danger on the 29th of September, 1364, the day on which the battle was fought. Montfort ascribed his victory to the great assistance that he received from the English allies, who were commanded by the gallant Chandos. A spot near Auray still bears the name of Le Cimetière des Anglais, from the tradition that the English who fell in the battle were interred there.

An interesting anecdote in connection with the combat is related by the old chronicler Argentré, who adds, that the incident gave rise to the Order of

L'Ermine. Charles of Blois had a pet white hare, which followed him like a dog, slept in his tent, and in short never left his side. Immediately however before the battle commenced, the animal ran over to the enemy's ranks, and, leaping on Montfort, remained near him during the fight. "This," says Argentré, "was regarded as a very favourite omen by Montfort, who, after the battle, instituted the Order of the Ermine, in allusion to the white hare." It is certain that the Knights of this Order held their meetings in St. Michael's chapel, which was built by Montfort on the site of his great battle ; and that on the death of the knights their gold collars were presented to the chapel, in which they were preserved.

It was during this war for the sovereignty, between John of Montfort and Charles of Blois, that the famous though somewhat apocryphal Battle of the Thirty took place, which is enshrined in the memory of all *Basse Bretons*. De Beaumanoir commanded the troops at Josselin on the side of Charles, and Bembro those at Ploërmel on that of John. Bembro, who is stated to have been an Englishman,* committed terrible excesses, and even availed himself of a suspension of hostilities to devastate the farms in

* All contemporary French historians of this period agree in depicting the conduct of the English troops in Brittany in very barbarous colours. One writer puts these words in the mouth of

the vicinity of his camp. These outrages coming to the ears of Beaumanoir led him to seek Bembro, whom he is said to have thus reproached :—

“ Sy a dit à Bembro par moult très grant fierté,
Chevaliers d'Angleterre, vous faites grand péchié
De travailler les povres, ceux qui sèment le blé.”*

Bembro retorted in great wrath ; and after many angry words had passed between the two chiefs, it was arranged that thirty men should be chosen on each side, and that they should fight at a place and time appointed. Both parties were punctual. The two commanders harangued their troops according to the custom of the period, and Bembro endeavoured to inspire his soldiers with greater courage and confidence in the issue of the battle, by reciting to them an ancient prophecy of Merlin :—

“ C'est fine vérité ;
J'ai fait lire mes livres ;† Merlin a destiné
Que nous aurons victoire sur Bretons aujourd'hé.”

As the combatants were at liberty to select their own

Duguesclin :—“ Par les saints de Bretagne ! tant qu'il y aura un Anglais en vie, il n'y aura ni paix ni loi !” And a Breton ballad on the battle of Saint-Cast opens with this verse :—“ Les Bretons et les Anglais sont voisins, mais ils ont été créés et mis au monde pour s'entre battre à tout jamais.”

* MS. Poem on the ‘Battle of the Thirty,’ in the Imperial Library at Paris.

† MS. Poem. The expression “ J'ai fait lire mes livres ” is explained by the fact that the knights and gentry of the period referred to in the poem were unable to read.

weapons, these were of various descriptions. Some carried lances, others swords, hatchets, and maces. Huchetou, who fought on the side of the English, dealt terrible destruction with a species of scythe ; and Billefort, a Breton, wielded a huge club reported to have weighed thirty-five pounds.

The English at first had the advantage. Three Bretons were taken prisoners ; two were killed and two others wounded. The battle was however continued with great fury on both sides until the death of Bembro, who was killed by a sword thrust, had a serious influence on the fortune of the day. For, according to the story, the English lost heart and faith in Merlin's prophecy, and were with considerable difficulty persuaded to continue the fight.

It was at this juncture that Beaumanoir, being wounded and having excessive thirst, cried aloud for water, when Geoffroy du Bois replied,

“Beaumanoir, boy ton sang, ta soif se passera,” words which had the effect of inspiring the wounded chief and his men with such vigour that the English were soon afterwards discomfited : and indeed how could it have been otherwise, seeing that, according to tradition, Beaumanoir himself, though severely wounded and wearied, slew no less than five Englishmen with his own hands ?

So runs the native version of this combat, which,

however traditional it may be regarded in other countries, is firmly believed to have taken place by Bretons, who have moreover raised a pyramidal monument in honour of the event, and continue to sing the ballad, ‘Stourm Ann Tregont,’ as it is called in the Cornouaille dialect at the Pardons.*

Auray ranks high in the long list of places in Brittany which I left with regret. A week might be pleasantly and profitably spent making excursions in the neighbourhood; and as long as Monsieur Hippolyte Perret rules over the *cuisine* of the ‘Pavillon d’en Haut,’ the tourist patronizing this inn will live *en grand seigneur*.

The name of this hotel may amuse the reader. The house and sign were set up in opposition to an inn which still exists near the harbour in the lower part of the town, called the ‘Pavillon d’en Bas.’ Contrasts in inn-signs are not however new in Auray, as for-

* The ballad endows Beaumanoir with almost superhuman strength, as he is represented having fasted on the day of the fight :—

“ Grande fut la bataille et longuement dura,
 Et le carnage horrible et deçà et delà ;
 La chaleur fut moult grande, chacun se sua ;
 De sueur et de sang la terre rosoya.
 A ce bon Samedi Beaumanoir si jeûna,
 Grand soif eut le Baron, à boire demanda.
 Messire Geoffroy du Bois tantôt répondre a :
 Bois ton sang, Beaumanoir, la soif se passera.”

This ballad was sung very generally during the Chouan wars.

merly two rival establishments in the town were named ‘L’Enfer’ and ‘Le Paradis.’

It was somewhat antagonistic to the idea of primitive travelling in a primitive country, as Brittany certainly is, to find that the conveyance to Vannes, my next stage (eighteen miles), was an omnibus ; not however like our unwieldy and uncomfortable machines,—which seem to have been contrived to show how much misery people will voluntarily endure, —but still an omnibus, as large letters on the side set forth. Happily there was room for a passenger beside the driver, and, loving fresh air more than company, I fortunately secured the outside seat. But I was, as events turned out, even more fortunate ; for my companion spoke good French as well as Breton, and was moreover willing to talk. We had driven about four miles, and had just passed through a fine forest, when, on emerging into the open country, he drew my attention to the ruins of a castle, some distance from the road, demanding at the same time whether I was acquainted with the legend attached to it. On replying that I had not heard it, he told me the following story :—

“In the middle of the sixth century, on the site of the castle whose ruins you now see, stood a stronghold, occupied by a Baron whose name was Commore, but who is familiarly known by the *sobriquet*

of Barbe-Bleu de la Basse Bretagne, to distinguish him from Gilles de Retz, the veritable Barbe-Bleu. He was noted for his crimes, but particularly for his habit of killing his wives as soon as he discovered that they were *enceinte*. He had just destroyed his fourth wife when he became enamoured of the beautiful Triphyne, daughter of Guérech, Count of Vannes, with whom he was on terms of great enmity. Unable, as may be readily imagined, to obtain by personal application her consent to become his wife, he sought the assistance of St. Gildas, whom he had propitiated by costly gifts to the church and a show of repentance. Gildas, deceived by fair promises, undertook to intercede for the Baron with the Count, and assured the latter that if he would give his daughter to Commore she would be kindly treated ; that if however the Baron took a dislike to her, he had made a vow he would not kill her, but restore the lady to Gildas, who would place her in the hands of her father uninjured ; and moreover that the Baron would make certain concessions to the Count, by which means the enmity of many years' standing would be terminated. The Count listened attentively, but was unwilling to accede, until at length the Saint's eloquent protestations of the Baron's sincerity gained his consent, and Triphyne was given to the Baron ; for the story belongs to the good old days when mar-

riages were contracted by the parents without consulting the wishes of their children.

"Well, the marriage, which was very unpopular, was celebrated with great pomp at Vannes, and the Baron departed with his bride to his castle. For some months she was, or at least seemed, happy, when one day she was terrified by a sudden change in her husband's behaviour, while at the same time his face assumed such a ferocious expression as to frighten her out of her senses. Terrified, she escaped from the castle, and, mounting her palfrey, galloped towards Vannes. But, alas! her husband, having been apprised of her departure, rode in hot haste after her. The poor lady soon discovered that she was pursued, and by the person most dreaded. In vain did she urge her panting steed; the cruel Baron gradually gained upon her. Wild with alarm she threw herself from her horse and ran into a wood by the roadside, where she hoped to escape detection; but it was too late. The Baron dragged her from the hiding-place, and, grasping her beautiful hair, regardless of tears and entreaties that her life might be spared, smote off her head, and, having wiped his sword, rode home, believing that his deed had not been seen. But he was mistaken; a peasant, too timid to interfere, saw the dreadful act, and hastened to tell the tale to Count Guérech.

"The unhappy father, remembering that it was at

the solicitation of St. Gildas that he had given his daughter to the Baron, and also remembering that the Saint had covenanted to restore her to him unharmed in case of her husband becoming tired of her, sent for Gildas, and demanded how he could reconcile what had happened to his daughter with his promise. On receiving the intelligence that Triphyne had been barbarously murdered, the Saint was greatly moved and wept bitterly ; then he desired to be conducted to the spot where the corpse lay. Falling on his knees beside the mutilated body, he prayed long and earnestly ; then, rising, he placed her decapitated head upon her body, and cried with a loud voice, ‘Triphyne ! Triphyne ! in the name of the most powerful God, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, rise up, and tell me where thou hast been !’

“The lady forthwith arose, and declared before a crowd of people who had assembled around her, that angels were on the point of bearing her into Paradise when the words of St. Gildas recalled her soul to earth, and restored her body to her father.

“Nor did the Saint stop here. Proceeding to the Baron’s castle, he ordered the gates to be thrown open, but, being denied admittance, he seized a handful of dust, and casting it against the building, the walls crumbled to the ground with a fearful noise, crushing the wicked Baron in their fall. And though

you may scarcely credit me, Sir," added my driver, "all attempts to rebuild the castle have proved abortive."

Such is the substance of the legend. The beautiful Triphyne was of course elevated to the honour of sainthood. Her name may be seen in the long list of Breton saints ; and a chapel was erected to her memory in the neighbourhood of Rostrenen, within which some frescoes were discovered a few years ago under the whitewash, depicting various incidents in the legend.

Who would have expected such a romantic story from the driver of an omnibus ? but be assured Breton omnibuses and their drivers are very different from those in London or Paris.

I must add, in justice to St. Gildas, that on the Saint's *fête*-day it is customary to sing the following words in reference to his miraculous resuscitation of Triphyne :—

"Sanete Gildasi,
Qui Trifinam suscitasti,
Quam tyrannus occiderat
Inter sylvarum pascua."

Three miles from Vannes a dilapidated cross may be seen, which is said to have been erected to mark the locality where the beautiful Triphyne was slain by her barbarous husband.

About half a mile beyond the cross my attention

was drawn to a long and extensive rope-walk, adjoining the high-road, near which stands an ancient chapel, called La Madcleine. A rope-walk, and a chapel not remarkable for architectural decoration, are not, as may be supposed, objects to arrest attention ; but there are circumstances connected with the trade of rope-maker in Brittany which, when known, will lead the tourist to regard a rope-walk and rope-makers in that country with interest. Observe the rope-walk near Vannes attentively, and you will perceive that, although the suburbs of that town abound with houses, the particular locality of this rope-walk, though apparently equally desirable for building purposes, is nearly destitute of houses. The explanation is curious, and affords another proof of the deep-rooted superstition prevalent throughout Brittany.

Towards the end of the twelfth century the Bretons were horrified by the appearance of lepers among them. They were supposed, though without sufficient evidence, to be descended from the Goths, and were called *Chiens de Goths*, which was perverted into *Kagous*, and this again into *Cagots*. They are represented as having been a race of dwarfs, extremely mean and loathsome in appearance. The peasants regarded them with such aversion that it became necessary to enact special laws for their governance.

On the appearance of the disease, the sufferers were

visited by priests, who treated them as being *in articulo mortis*. They were exhorted to resign themselves to the will of God, and, having been divested of their clothes, were attired in a black robe, sprinkled with holy water, and conducted to church; there they were obliged to hear the funeral service performed over them, and, at its conclusion, were led to their future home, which was furnished with a pallet, chair, table, and small lamp.

The priests now admonished them never to go abroad without wearing a piece of red cloth on a conspicuous part of their garments, not to touch provisions in the markets excepting with the end of a rod, never to enter taverns or any places of public amusement, not to wash their hands in fountains or streams, and on no account to caress children. They were moreover compelled to engage in religious services apart from their fellow-men, and when they died were buried in cemeteries far removed from those appropriated to the people.

At a later period, when the disease abated, the *Cagots* were allowed to exercise the trades of cooper and rope-maker, but always in prescribed localities without the towns. These strict laws appear not to have been confined to Brittany. The inhabitants of the south of France had an equal aversion to *Cagots*, who were regarded as a *race maudite*. In some of

the Pyrenean churches small doors now built up are shown, through which, according to tradition, the proscribed race were obliged to enter the sacred buildings. There however no uncharitable memories are kept alive by the peasants towards any portion of their fellow-countrymen ; whereas in Brittany, according to native writers, considerable aversion continues to be entertained by the population generally against individuals practising the callings of cooper or rope-maker, who are still sometimes uncharitably called *Kagous*, and treated with hereditary contempt. Villemarqué states that the *Kagous* form the burden of several songs composed anterior to the fifteenth century, at which period leprosy disappeared in Brittany.





A Gateway at Vannes.

CHAPTER XVIII.

VANNES.—SKETCHING DIFFICULTIES.—THE CATHEDRAL.—CURIOS
ECCLESIASTICAL LAWS.—ST. VINCENT FERRIER.—THE ROYAL BONE
COLLECTOR.—SARDINES.—THE COLLEGE.—INSURRECTION OF STU-
DENTS.—THE MEN OF VANNES.—NAPOLEON'S OPINION OF THEM.
—THEIR GREAT STRENGTH.—GAME OF SOULE.—MODE OF PLAY-
ING.—STORY OF FRANÇOIS THE SOULEUR.—LAWS OF SOULE.—
TERRIBLE REVENGE.

VANNES is a charming old town, thoroughly Breton, abounding in quaint houses, and girdled by crumbling walls, pierced here and there by picturesque gates, which form delightful subjects for sketching. But sketching at Vannes is a work of considerable difficulty ; for although the town is on the skirts of civilization (the large city of Nantes, with its railway to Paris, being only seventy miles distant), the inhabi-

tants appear to regard drawing as an occult art, and a sketcher as being in league with the powers of darkness ; at least I found myself the object of intense curiosity while drawing, and was on more than one occasion surrounded by dense crowds of wondering gazers, who, to judge from their remarks, seemed never to have seen a sketcher before. It was Tréguier over again, only I am bound to say that my Vannes visitors were less odorous ; but the weather was not quite so diaphoretic.

The cathedral of Vannes is of great antiquity, and possesses a handsome portal of Kersanton stone. The chapter-house contains some interesting documents, among the most remarkable being a manuscript volume containing the ecclesiastical laws enacted by a council of church dignitaries held at Vannes in 461. Some of the clauses are curious. All communication with Jews was expressly interdicted. These people, by the way, were constrained to live in one street in the town, and the stones are still shown to which iron bars were attached to prevent them leaving their quarters after nightfall. Priests were forbidden to practise the arts of divination, either by consulting holy books or by any other means. Virgins breaking their vows were condemned to undergo the severest ecclesiastical punishment. Monks were permitted to have only one monastery. Priests were enjoined to

practise temperance, and to wean the people from all pagan rites and ceremonies.

The precept against divination leads to the inference that this art was practised by the priests, and we cannot therefore be surprised to find that all the Pagan altars had not been overthrown at that period. The patron of the cathedral and town of Vannes is St. Vincent Ferrier, in whose honour a *fête* is held annually in the first week in September.* On this occasion the Saint's bones are exhibited, and a procession, headed by the Bishop, passes through the streets with much solemnity. The particular veneration paid to the relics of this Saint arises from the circumstance that they were preserved to the town by what the citizens are pleased to regard as a special miracle.

The archives of the cathedral relate that Philip II. of Spain, who, we are told, was much fonder of relics than of observing the precepts of the Gospel, set his heart on adding the bones of St. Vincent Ferrier to his holy osteological collection in the Spanish cathedrals. Accordingly he preferred a request to the chapter of Vannes to be favoured with the precious

* The *fêtes* and Pardons in this part of Brittany are so curious and characteristic of the primitive nature of the country, that the tourist should be particularly careful to inquire at each town he visits when they are to be held, and to see them if possible.

relics ; but the authorities, who had the bones in their charge, and who esteemed them as highly as they were valued by his Most Catholic Majesty of Spain, declined parting with their treasures.

But Philip, although for the present obliged to rest contented with the answer of the chapter, was nevertheless determined to make another attempt to gain possession of the mortal remains of St. Vincent.

During the great League war, it happened that Spanish troops, allies of the Duke de Mercœur, were quartered at Vannes, which town had declared for the League party. This seemed a highly favourable opportunity for carrying off the relics, and Philip accordingly gave the Spaniards instructions how to effect the desired object without causing his Majesty to be suspected. But a citizen of Vannes, who was at that time in Spain, was warned in a dream, or, as we should profanely say, received intelligence of the sacrilegious plot, and, like a good burgher, duly apprised his fellow-citizens of the impending evil.

On the day fixed for the abstraction of the relics, the conspirators had ordered a Play to be performed in the large square, to divert public attention from the cathedral ; but, when search was made for the bones, the shrine in which they were kept was found empty, a canon having secreted them in his house. There they remained until the termination of the

war, when they were restored with much pomp to their former abiding-place ; and ever since they have been annually carried in procession through the town, to the exceeding comfort and edification of the good citizens of Vannes, who place great confidence in the protection of their patron Saint.

Vannes is a great dépôt for sardines. Strolling down to the harbour, which is situated at the north-east extremity of the Sea of Morbihan, I saw piles of these silvery fish which had been caught off the coast, and were destined to be embalmed in the tin cases familiar to us.

These fish form, during the season for their capture, a staple food of the Bretons. You will see stalls along the quays and in the streets of most seaport-towns, at which fresh sardines are continually undergoing frying, and, as a dozen may be purchased for a sou, the consumption is extremely large ; but the supply seems inexhaustible.

Not far from the harbour stands a large old building inscribed “ Collége,” having no particular architectural features to arrest attention ; but what it may want in this respect is abundantly compensated by historical interest, for it was the cradle of a noble and successful struggle against despotic tyranny and cruel persecution.

During the fifteen years previous to the July Revo-

lution three Crosses of the Legion of Honour, carved in stone, with appropriate heraldic devices, surmounted the principal entrance, and recalled the stirring days when the students of the College, in the early part of this century, acquired everlasting renown by their martial deeds worthy of veterans in war.

The crosses have disappeared ; but the memory of the valour which led to their being set up on the wall has not passed away. Eminent French authors have written the story, and English poets have made it the subject of their poems ; briefly it runs thus :—

The College of Vannes was founded in the sixteenth century, and, after having instructed great numbers of Breton youths, was dissolved in 1791. In 1804 it was reorganized, and among the students who entered the establishment were twelve Chouan chiefs, whose studies had been interrupted by the Revolution. Such seeds of Royalist patriotism were not likely to be fruitless ; but although considerable discontent prevailed against the Imperial sway (for there was scarcely a student whose relations and friends had not suffered in the struggle between the Royalists and Revolutionists), no outbreak occurred during the period of Napoleon's reign prior to his renunciation of the throne of France ; and this act, by restoring the Bourbons, terminated for the time all ill feeling on the part of the Breton students. But when the in-

telligence arrived that the rapacious Eagle, which was supposed to have folded its wings at Elba, had alighted again in France, the spirit of the Breton students broke out in fierce manifestations of displeasure, which were increased by the bad poliey of Napoleon, who endeavoured to subdue the youths by force rather than by lenity.

The celebrated and impious command, “d’aimer l’Empereur sous peine de damnation éternelle,” was disobeyed by the students, nor would they chant the *Domine salvum fac Imperatorem* in the College chapel. Greater disaffection was now manifested, and a desire was expressed to be led by their Chouan comrades against the Imperial troops. Such proceedings did not of course remain long unnoticed by Government. The authorities at Vannes received orders to subdue the rebellious students, who now numbered 630. It was hoped, by making a terrible example of a few of them, to awe the entire body; but the punishment had a totally different effect.* One unfortunate youth was almost beaten to death, in hopes that he would reveal the names of the ring-leaders. “Kill me if you will,” was his answer, while

* Châteaubriand alludes more than once, in his Memoirs, to the bellicose dispositions of the Breton students, and to their dislike of the Imperial sway. One of his fellow-students was killed in a duel with an officer in the public square at Nantes.

his tortured flesh was quivering, “but you shall not hear their names from me.” Being taken before his fellow-students, he was told that his life would be spared if he cried “Vive l’Empereur!” No, these words would never pass his lips. Then he was led back to his cell, where he was kept chained for many days; and when it was found that he did not die from the ill treatment, he was forced to join the ranks of the Imperial army as a private soldier.

This outrage had a most exasperating effect on the Collegians. With one voice they swore that they would be revenged. All—from the Chouan chiefs who inflamed the minds of their comrades by thrilling stories of the Vendéan and Chouan wars, to the most youthful student—vowed that they would fight till death against the oppressor. The story reads like a fable, but every part is truthful history. What follows is even more extraordinary. The first act was to elect Captains, and exclude striplings from their ranks, who however protested strongly, in the words of Corneille, against being left behind :—

“Je suis jeune, il est vrai, mais aux âmes bien nées
La valeur n’attend pas le nombre des années.”

This elimination reduced the number of fighting students to 370. These, led by their chiefs, were conducted singly into an obscure room, where, kneeling before an altar surmounted by a crucifix, at the foot

of which was a medallion of Louis XVIII., they took this oath :—

“ Je jure devant Dieu et sur l’image sacrée du Roi, d’être fidèle et dévoué au Roi Louis XVIII. et à ses successeurs ; de répandre jusqu’à la dernière goutte de mon sang pour défendre ses droits et sa cause ; de mourir plutôt que de jamais abandonner mes camarades, et de garder le secret le plus inviolable envers et contre tous.”

Arms were now purchased and carefully concealed. A student, who had been taught the musket and sword exercise as a healthy gymnastic recreation, imparted this very necessary branch of a soldier’s drill to his fellow-collegians. They now prepared for the grand step ; this was the selection of an experienced military leader. A deputation waited upon the Chevalier de Margadel, an experienced officer, who lived in a neighbouring château, and who had taken an active part in the Vendéan war against the Revolutionary party. He was highly calculated, both from his personal appearance and manner, to win the affections of a youthful candidate for military glory ; and the students saw in him the *beau idéal* of a leader. But when he was solicited to become their chief, he was so amazed by the boyish appearance of his petitioners, and so doubtful of their sincerity, that he paused long before he gave an answer. At last, to their great joy,

he granted their prayer, and promised to acquaint them when the proper time for action arrived. In a few weeks, which seemed years,—for they burned to distinguish themselves in the field,—they received the long-expected summons; and having confessed to a priest who was in their confidence, and received his blessing, they repaired, under cover of night, to their Commander's château. A substantial meal awaited them; and the Chevalier's daughter, a lovely and heroic girl, of whom it might be said,

“Courage was cast about her like a dress
Of solemn comeliness ;
A gathered mind and an untroubled face
Did give her dangers grace,”

decorated each student with cockades made by her own hands. They then sat down to supper, but had not been many minutes seated, when intelligence arrived that a party of Imperialist troops, or ‘Blues’ as they were called, were at hand. The youthful band had now practical opportunities of learning the arts of war. Picquets were posted round the château, and, profiting by the information gained from the outposts, the students, who had every reason to apprehend destruction if they remained where they were, contrived to escape into the adjoining woods, which were familiar to them, and subsequently joined a large force of Chouans near Auray. With these bold fel-

lows they fought several battles against their common enemy, in which they displayed valour far beyond their years. At first they underwent considerable ridicule on account of their extreme youth and inexperience in war; but their foes soon discovered that the “children,” as they were called, were neither puny nor contemptible antagonists.

Rio, one of their captains, who has written the history of this curious struggle in a work of great interest, entitled ‘*La Petite Chouannerie; ou Histoire d'un Collège Breton sous l'Empire*,’ frequently interrupts the course of historical narrative to recount deeds of individual prowess enacted by his youthful companions. On one occasion, when exposed to a murderous discharge of grape and round shot, a student named Le Thiée, who had a post of great danger assigned to him, for the purpose of encouraging his comrades, and at the same time of distracting their attention, struck up the refrain—

“ Si jamais le fer d'une lance
Me frappe au milieu des combats,
Je chanterai——”

when his burst of generous zeal was cut short by a ball which severed him in twain. On another occasion a lad, whose physical strength was not equal to his bravery, was mortally wounded; while life was ebbing, tears started from his eyes, and he exclaimed,

"Would that I were at home!" In a moment his comrades were round him: "Is this the way a warrior should die?"—"Vive le Roi!" was his reply, as his face crimsoned under the rebuke.

The enthusiasm of the Chouans and peasants, who witnessed the deeds of the soldier-boys, was intense: they were regarded as specially protected by Heaven,—a belief in some degree confirmed by the circumstance that their standard bore the emblem of the Saint-Esprit, selected purposely in opposition to the Eagles on the banners of the Imperial army.*

Women who brought lint and linen for the use of the wounded, were told that balls would be far more welcome. They went home and converted their tin and pewter domestic utensils into ammunition. The little band were much cut up, but victory was almost always on their side and that of the Chouans. At length, after a long and bloody struggle near Auray,

* Wordsworth's poem, 'The Eagle and the Dove,' is elegantly descriptive of this circumstance. I extract the first two stanzas:—

"Shade of Caractacus! if spirits love
The cause they fought for in their earthly home,
To see the Eagle ruffled by the Dove
May soothe thy memory of the chains of Rome."

"These children claim thee for their sire; the breath
Of thy renown, from Cambrian mountain, fans
A flame within them that despises death,
And glorifies the truant youth of Vannes."

in which the students enacted prodigies of valour, a panic seized the Imperialists, who fled in great disorder; and shortly afterwards the news of the defeat at Waterloo and Bonaparte's abdication terminated the war-career of the students.

Their services were not unrequited by the monarch for whom they had fought. Officers were sent expressly to Vannes to thank them for their heroism, and to decorate the breasts of three of their most eminent captains with the Cross of the Legion of Honour. Their names deserve mention: they are Bainvel, Le Quellec, and Rio, their historian, who dwells long and exultingly on the ceremony. It was celebrated with great pomp; high mass was performed by the Bishop and his clergy; a suitable discourse followed, and then the three heroes were summoned to an altar erected on a stage, where, on their knees, they received from the hands of Mademoiselle d'Olonne, celebrated for her great beauty, the Crosses which they had so well merited; and when she had fastened them on their breasts, in the true spirit of chivalry, she kissed the young heroes. M. Rio's confession, that he was so overcome by his honours that he was obliged to be assisted down the altar-steps, is not surprising.

It was indeed a proud day for the students of Vannes; and their successors, within the venerable

building, love to recount the story of ‘*La Petite Chouannerie*,’ which is one of the most remarkable in the eventful chapter of the Vendéan and Breton civil wars.

The visitor to Vannes and the environs cannot fail to be much struck by the athletic appearance of the male population, who inherit their forefathers’ strength and herculean proportions. Napoleon said of the men of Vannes, in his day, that they had “*corps de fer et cœurs d’acier.*”

Those I saw were equally deserving of the physical portion of this compliment, and I have no doubt that their heroism in war would be found equal to that of their fathers. The Morbihan peasantry have indeed been always famous for their love of military and naval glory. There is a story told of one who, having served his King well and long, was rewarded by receiving an honourable decoration. When the chiefs of the revolutionary party decreed that all persons, on whom medals or any kind of decoration had been conferred, should give them up to the Republican government, the glory-loving Breton appeared before the Committee of Public Safety with his medal and a hammer: “Citizens,” he exclaimed, “you require me to place my medal in your hands, but ’tis the gold that you doubtless want!” then, destroying the device with the hammer, he added, “Now you may

take *it*, but the *honour* which belongs to me you shall not have."

Native writers allege that the game of Soule, which was formerly played frequently throughout the department of Morbihan, and which is still, in defiance of the laws, occasionally played in the wild and secluded districts of the Communes of Vannes and Hennebon, has had considerable effect in developing the physical powers of the peasantry. I was extremely desirous to see this famous game played ; but, in answer to my inquiries, I was told that since it has been declared unlawful, the players keep the locality of a projected game so secret that the place is not known beyond the parish where it is intended to be played. Not being therefore able to give any account of this once great national game from my own observation, and at the same time feeling that a work on Brittany would be imperfect without some description of the manner in which it is played, I abridge Souvestre's account of a Soule, which will in all probability be new to the majority of my readers.

The name of Soule is given to an enormous leather ball filled with bran, which is contended for by two opposite parties ; the victory remains with those who succeed in carrying the ball to a different Commune to that in which the game commenced.

Soule is supposed to be a relic of the sun-worship

of the Celts. The ball, which, by its spherical form, was typical of the god of day, was thrown up, and when it fell, desperate attempts were made to obtain possession of it. The word Soule comes from the Celtic *heaul* (sun), in which the aspirate has been changed to *s*, thus converting *heaul* to *seaul*, or *soule*.* The game of Soule, as played in the Morbihan, is a drama in which death not unfrequently performs a tragic part; but as long as this is supposed to result from accident, plenary indulgence is accorded to the man who strikes the fatal blow. A Soule is in fact a special occasion for wiping off injuries by revenge; for, as an old Souleur told Souvestre, "Who is there who does not know some one whom he wishes he could kill?" and if a Souleur should cherish no enmity against his neighbour, there is sufficient excitement and jealousy subsisting between parishes to cause every one to enter into the spirit of the game with proper emulation. Frequently townsmen contend against countrymen, and on these occasions all the strength of the combatants is put forth.

When the day and locality of a Soule have been fixed, all the inhabitants of the district attend, either as spectators or performers; the latter are always

* I cannot help regarding all this as somewhat fanciful erudition. Surely there is no necessity to seek for religious authority for football! But Souvestre was somewhat of a romancist.

dressed in such a manner as to afford their adversaries as little holding-grip of their garments as possible. When all the Souleurs have arrived on the ground, the conditions of the game are declared, and the opposing parties retire to a prescribed distance from the spot where the Soule is thrown up. The game then commences. At first only the youngest and least experienced Souleurs join in the struggle; the strong and practised Souleurs remain apart, contemplating the contention, and cheering their respective parties. Presently however, when the ball has been driven near the confines of the parish, all the players join in the contest, and a frightful *mélée* takes place, which soon assumes the appearance of a combat: blood flows, limbs are broken, eyes torn from their sockets, and in short every species of injury is inflicted by the frenzied combatants on each other. At length, when they are for the most part half-dead and exhausted by fatigue, some one who has sufficient strength seizes the ball, and runs off with it to an adjoining Commune, and if he succeeds in gaining the desired goal he is proclaimed the victor. But this is an arduous and perilous undertaking, and the hatred of an enemy may render it even fatal, as the fate of François de Pontivy, commonly called the Souleur, testifies.

François had acquired great renown in the Morbihan for the manner in which he played this game,

and had rendered himself redoubtable to all the peasants in his neighbourhood. He carefully preserved all the Soules that he had won, and showed them with the same pride that an Indian warrior feels when he exhibits the gory scalps taken from his enemies. And although age had somewhat diminished François's vigour, he still continued to add more trophies to his collection.

One man alone had long disputed the victory with this great Souleur; this was a peasant of Kergrist, called Ivon Marker; but François had contrived to give Marker a terrible blow in a Soule at Neuliac, from the effects of which Ivon died. Pierre Marker, his son, succeeded to the pretensions of his father, without however meeting with much better fortune; for François deprived his new adversary of an eye at a Soule at Cleguerec, and broke two of his teeth on another occasion. From this period Pierre, smarting under his injuries, swore to be revenged.

A Soule was held some time after at Stival, which was attended by François and Pierre. At first all passed off as usual; François however remarked that Pierre avoided mingling with the combatants. In vain he challenged him to come on and join in the struggle, addressing him tauntingly, "Come hither, Chouan, that I may scoop out thy remaining eye!" Pierre made no answer, and still remained apart

from the *mélée*. Once, towards the close of the day, when François was down, he felt the pressure of tremendous iron-shod *sabots* on his body, and, looking up, beheld the one-eyed Pierre scowling ominously on him, but, being assisted by friends, he soon regained his legs.

Presently the night began to fall, and the majority of the Souleurs, overpowered by fatigue, withdrew from the contest, leaving the field to a few eager competitors for the prize. At this juncture François took advantage of a favourable opportunity, and seizing the ball, fled with it across the country. He was immediately pursued, but he ran well, and soon distanced his pursuers, who gradually dropped off, and he finally lost sight of them. François now looked upon the Soule as his own, and in truth never had he made greater exertions to win it. Conceiving that he was safe from further pursuit, he halted for a few moments to recover breath, and then recommenced running towards a small river separating the Communes of Stival and Pontivy. He saw the willows on the banks, and was within a few feet of the water, when he heard steps behind him, and, turning round, saw through the shades of night a dark object hastening rapidly towards him. Then, and for the first time, the old Souleur was afraid, for he felt too weak to offer successful resistance, and he was too distant from his

people to hope for help from them. There was nothing for him but flight: summoning all his strength he rushed onwards. One foot was in the water when he heard a well-known voice close to him; with the energy of despair he attempted to gain the opposite bank by a spring, but, worn out by fatigue, his limbs gave way, and he fell heavily on the sharp stones which formed the bed of the stream. Quick as lightning a hand was on his breast, and he saw the dreaded face of Pierre above him. With an instinctive movement François stretched his arm towards the left bank of the stream,—for that bank is in the Commune of Pontivy, and if he but touches the marge he is safe; but his enemy seized his hand in his iron grasp, and screamed,

“Thou art in Stival, *Bourgeois*, and I have the right over thee.”

“Leave me, Chouan!” replied François.

“Give me the Soule.”

“Here it is; now let me go.”

“Thou owest me something more, *Bourgeois*.”

“What?”

“Thine eye!” shrieked Pierre, “thine eye!” and with these words he tore François’s left eye from its socket.

“Leave me, leave me, murderer!” cried the latter, writhing in agony.

"Thou owest me thy teeth yet!"

And the teeth of the old Souleur were shattered. Then wild frenzy seized Pierre : retaining his enemy's head beneath his arm, he pounded it with his iron-shod *sabot* so long and savagely, that the following day François was found on the banks of the stream in a senseless state ; and although he was restored to life, the rest of his days were clouded by blindness and idiocy.

Pierre was arrested and tried for the murderous assault, which he did not deny having committed ; but he insisted that he had a right to be acquitted, for when he overtook François he was still in the Commune of Stival, and therefore had not transgressed the laws of Soule. He was acquitted, but Soule was forbidden to be played ; and thus, to use a sporting phrase, it is as difficult to learn the fixture of a Soule as that of an English prize-fight, and the secret is probably even better kept in Brittany, as the Souleurs only talk Breton.

If you are fond of myths, and have a couple of days to spare, Vannes will be found a good starting-place for an excursion to the forest of Broceliand, not far from Ploërmel, which is about eighteen miles distant.

In this forest Armoricans believed, and Bretons who hold by ancient traditions still believe, that the

enchanter Merlin is entombed. For although other countries claim this hero of romance, the Breton will tell you that the rod of his Merlin swallowed the rod of all other enchanters.

The story runs, that the fair Viviane essayed the arts of enchantment on Merlin which he had taught her, and had the mortification to lose him by these means. Gauvain, and other Knights of the Round Table, are still, according to the legend, seeking Merlin's tomb in the forest of Broeeliand; but although the enchanter is often heard bewailing his fate, which consigns him to a living grave, he has never been seen.

Popular tradition is, in this instance, somewhat at issue with the old romance, which consigns Merlin to a more dignified and pleasant confinement than that of a tomb. Here is the ancient chronicle:—

“Ung jour Nymanne* et Merlin s'en alloyent main a main par la forest de Broeeliande. Si assirent a l'ombre des haultes espines sur l'herbe verte, et jouierent et solacieerent, et Merlin moist son chief au giron de la demoyselle, et elle le commençà a tastonner si qu'il s'endormist. Puis la demoyselle se leva et fist une cerne de son guimple autour du buysson et autour Merlin, et commençà ses enchantemens, telz comme

* Thus is Viviane styled. Another proof of the ambiguous parallelisms in the spelling of names in old romances and chronicles.

lui-mesmes lui avoit aprins, et feist par neuf fois le cerne et par neuf fois l'enchantement, et puis s'en alla asseoir empres luy. Et luy mist sa teste en songiron. Et quant il s'esveilla si regarda entour luy. Et luy fut avis qu'il estoit enclos *en la plus forste tour du monde et couche a ung moult beau lit.* Et lors dist a la dame, Madame, deceu m'avez si vous ne demourez avec moy; car nul n'a pouvoir de deffaire cest tour fors vous. Bel amy, dist elle, ie y seray souvent, et m'y tiendrez entre vous bras, et moy vous! Et de ce luy tint elle covenant, car depuis ne faillit guerres nuict ne jour, que elle n'y feust."

As may be supposed, this mythical personage, who plays an important part in the legendary poetry of Wales, Cornwall, and Scotland,* has not been overlooked by Armoricane bards. A popular ballad, in the Cornouaille dialect, entitled ‘Marzin-Divinour,’ or Merlin the Diviner, describes him accompanied by his black dog, seeking for the red egg of the sea-serpent, which confers unlimited power on the possessor. The ballad gives Merlin a Druidical character, as he is represented gathering the mistletoe, and being otherwise addicted to Druidical pursuits.

* The tomb of the Caledonian Merlin is shown near the village of Drumelzier, on the Tweed. It is remarkable that Geoffroy of Monmouth, who wrote a life of this worthy, professes to have compiled it from an Armoricane original.

But besides the associations connected with Merlin, Broceliand has other charms for the lover of picturesque legends. Among the fine chestnut and oak-trees you will be shown the magic fountain of Baranton, and the Val Sans Retour, which you will be told is a far more perplexing maze than those constructed by cunning gardeners.



Houses in Nantes.

CHAPTER XIX.

JOURNEY TO NANTES.—BABY COMPANIONS.—ST. LAURENT.—A SAINTLY WAY TO CURE BOILS.—IGNORANCE OF THE PEASANTS.—LA ROCHE BERNARD.—ARRIVAL AT NANTES.—PREPARATIONS FOR A FÊTE.—THE CATHEDRAL.—TOMB OF THE LAST DUKE OF BRITTANY.—THE HEART OF THE DUCHESS ANNE.—THE NOYADES.—THE SALORGES.—A MANIAC.—CONSERVES ALIMENTAIRES.—MAISON DES ENFANS NANTAIS.—PICTURESQUE HOUSES.—THE CASTLE.—THE OPERA.—THE FÊTE.—FRENCH APPRECIATION OF THE ENGLISH ARMY.—THE ENGLISH PRESS.—TE DEUM.—FIREWORKS.—LEAVE NANTES.—CONCLUSION.

I was made very sensible that my pleasant tour in Brittany was drawing to a close on finding myself journeying to Nantes in a Diligence which announced, in large letters, that it was *en correspondance* with the railway from that city to Paris. Fortune, or misfortune, willed

it that I shared the *coupé* with two fond mothers, who spent the evening and the greater part of the night in lulling, or rather endeavouring to lull, two babies to sleep, who manifested by their incessant screaming that they were extremely uncomfortable. But besides the babies we had two fretful children, who acted as wedges in the narrow *coupé*.

There is a story told of the poet Campbell, who, having had the misfortune to confess to a loving Mamma that he doted on children, had the office of nurse to some half-dozen forced on him for the evening. When asked whether his love for infants had not been on this occasion fully gratified, he is said to have replied with a groan, that he had been longing for Herod all the time.

Now although my desires were not quite of so murderous a hue as those of the poet, I could not help more than once speculating on the effects of chloroform upon infants, and wishing that by any innocuous means we could have suppressed the screams of the unquiet children. But then there would have remained the smell,—that peculiar baby-smell, which waxes in intensity as the cries of the little wretches rage and swell. Would any known or unknown chemical agent have destroyed that? Happily I had a corner seat, which gave me control over one window, which I kept open during the journey, to the great

discomfiture of my companions ; but I verily believe that had it not been for this safety-valve I should have been suffocated.

A short way from Vannes we came to St. Laurent, a small village which apparently possesses no features of interest. But if you travel this road, you must not omit pausing for a few minutes at St. Laurent, to see the chapel dedicated to this Saint. This is frequented by vast numbers of people, who observe a very curious practice, which, according to Breton authorities, is extremely ancient. This consists in offering nails on the Saint's shrine instead of money ; the contact of the nails with the shrine causing them, in the estimation of the people, to become endowed with miraculous power, when they are sold by the priests for the benefit of the chapel. You will naturally suppose that the nails are used for some household purpose. By no means ; and in all probability you would never guess the use to which they are applied.

The Bretons, or at least the Morbihan Bretons, are, it seems, greatly troubled by boils : a complaint, by the way, considerably on the increase in England. The pain of these plagues is compared by the Morbihan peasants to that which St. Laurent suffered when he was roasted alive. If this be a faithful comparison, we must congratulate ourselves that English boils do not yet occasion the exquisite agony of those

which torment the Bretons. Well, the French for boils being *cloûs* (nails), the peasants offer these articles, as I have said, on St. Laurent's shrine, imagining that when they have been rendered holy, their contact with a boil will effect a speedy cure. This superstition is so absurd as to provoke ridicule; and yet it is not only tolerated, but even encouraged by the priests, who find in it a profitable revenue. Hear what a Canon of Vannes Cathedral says on the subject:—
“Cet usage populaire manque de gravité et prête à la raillerie ; mais ceux qui en feraient tomber le ridicule sur la religion seraient bien peu équitables. C'est le peuple qui l'a imaginé ; c'est le peuple qui le perpétue, et il ne serait pas aussi facile qu'on s'imagine de l'y faire renoncer. On est même obligé de tolérer les pratiques qui ne sont que bizarres, pour combattre avec plus de hardiesse et de succès celles qui sont criminelles.”*

The logic of this is almost as diverting as the superstition which the easy Canon encourages. Truly the schoolmaster has not walked abroad in the Morbihan ! This is borne out by State Educational Statistics. Among the *eighty-six* Departments into which France is divided, that of the Morbihan ranks as the *eighty-second* in the order of enlightenment. In the Meuse, *seventy-four* out of *one hundred* can

* Mahé, ‘Antiquités du Morbihan.’

read and write : in the Morbihan only *fourteen* per cent.

As the night fell we arrived at La Roche Bernard, a small town on the Vilaine, here spanned by one of the finest wire suspension-bridges in France. The distance between the points of suspension is 626 feet, and the height of the roadway above the water 122 feet. This was the last object seen by me before we arrived at Nantes ; but if guide-books are veracious, the country between that city and La Roche Bernard is singularly uninteresting and dreary ; the fine swelling hills of Brittany, with their varied picturesque features of rock, wood, and water, subsiding, east of Vannes, into that vast plain which characterizes the greater portion of central France. I should in all probability have slept through the rest of the journey, had not the odour of my infantine neighbours compelled me to keep my head out of the window,—a position highly unfavourable to somnolency. However, as all things come to an end, so did my miseries ; and at three in the morning we rattled into the great city of Nantes, clattering through the unpeopled streets with a noise that must have aroused many an uneasy sleeper. What can be the object to start from Vannes at such an hour as to bring the traveller into Nantes in the middle of the night, long before the trains leave for Paris, is beyond my comprehension.

But, as tourists in France, where railways are not, know well, the ways of Diligences are past finding out.

I was so fortunate as to obtain the last untenanted bedroom in the excellent Hôtel de France, where I slept until the vast city woke me by its Paris-like roar. I was still in Brittany, but how different from that Brittany in which I had been lately wandering ! Looking from my window I saw the large square below filled with carriages, speeding here and there, among which were many gaily painted omnibuses, which vehicle, by the way, the Nantais claim the merit of having invented. In short I had exchanged in a night a wild and primitive country, at least a century behind the rest of the world, for a miniature Paris, for such Nantes is, with its 100,000 inhabitants.

After an abundant breakfast in a spacious *salle à manger*, resplendent with mirrors, chandeliers, and paintings, I set out to see the city. It was in great commotion ; for the authorities had ordered, in obedience to commands received from Paris, that a *fête* should be solemnized the following day (Sunday) in honour of the taking of Sebastopol by the Allied Armies, on which occasion there was to be a grand Te Deum in the Cathedral, at which all civil and military officers were to assist, and a display of fire-

works and general illuminations. So the populace were seething with excitement; for the French dearly love a *fête*, and a *fête* in honour of the brave “Armée de la Crimée” was very popular.

Threading the crowded and labyrinthine streets, I reached the Cathedral, which I found closed. Workmen were making preparations for the morrow, but a fee to the *janitrix*, who guarded a small door opening from the Suisse's residence into the building, obtained me admittance. The Cathedral at Nantes is a noble fragment; but you are led to overlook its fragmentary character by the majesty of the nave.* This is an almost perfect architectural performance, combining the gorgeousness of the *flamboyant* style with great vastness. The height is prodigious,—120 feet. The architect who suspended the roof at this elevation knew well the power of height upon the mind,—a power sadly neglected by the builders of most cathedrals, and particularly of those otherwise magnificent fanes which adorn our land.

The choir and solitary south transept are unworthy of the glorious nave. The former is a Romanesque appendage of the eleventh century; and the transept was built in the fifteenth century, and was never com-

* According to tradition, the Cathedral is built on the site of a Temple, erected in honour of the God Volianus. There are several inscriptions on tablets preserved in the Hôtel de Ville bearing the name of this God.

pleted. To this portion of the building every visitor is conducted, to see one of the most perfect Renaissance monuments in existence. This is the former tomb of Francis II., last Duke of Brittany, and his wife, Margaret de Foix, which was originally erected in the church of the Carmelites by Anne of Brittany, whose heart, in a gold box, was also enclosed in the tomb. How this exquisite piece of sculpture escaped destruction in the stormy period of the Revolution is a marvel; for the Revolutionists, who made Nantes a seething hell, tore the illustrious dead from their sculptured tomb, scattered their ashes, and yet, in their hot haste, as we must presume, to wreak their vengeance on other matters, left the monument almost uninjured. Its preservation is the more singular, as the tomb of John IV. of Brittany, which is said to have been extremely beautiful, was totally destroyed.

An inscription on the preserved monument sets forth that the ashes of Arthur III., Duke of Brittany and Constable of France in 1437, which escaped destruction, were deposited in the tomb, and it was removed to its present situation. It would be difficult, without a pictorial representation, to convey a just idea of the exquisite beauty of this monument. It may be briefly described as a large altar-tomb of white marble, surmounted by a black slab, also of marble, upon which repose effigies of the Duke and

Duchess. Their heads are supported by three angels. A lion, bearing the arms of Brittany between his paws, lies at the feet of the Duke, and a greyhound, supporting the shield of the Duchess, crouches at her feet. At the four corners of the tomb stand life-size figures of Justice, Strength, Prudence, and Wisdom, and round the sides are statuettes of the Twelve Apostles in niches, St. Francis d'Assisi and St. Margaret, patron Saints of the Duke and Duchess, and Charlemagne and St. Louis. Below the statuettes are sixteen figures in black marble, representing mourners. The whole of this exquisite piece of work is stated to have been executed, in 1507, by Michel Colomb, a native of St. Pol de Léon.* The box which enclosed the heart of the Duchess Anne, after being concealed for centuries, was shown to the public a few years ago, and may be seen in the city museum. It is in the form of a heart, surmounted by a crown; on the rim is the following inscription in enamel :—

* It appears, according to a document in Rymer's 'Fœdera,' that British artists had acquired a high reputation on the Continent in the early part of the fifteenth century, and that their services were employed to decorate churches in Brittany. We are told that Thomas Colyne, Thomas Holewell, and Thomas Poppelhowe obtained a Safe-conduct from Henry IV. in order to carry to Brittany an alabaster monument which they had executed in England to the memory of John IV., Duke of Brittany, and which was erected in the Cathedral at Nantes.

CVEVR DE . VERTVS ORNÉ .
DIGNEMENT . COVRONNÉ .

Upon one side of the heart, also in enamel :—

EN . CE . PETIT . VAISSEAV .
DE . FIN . OR PVR . ET MVNDE .
REPOSE : VNG . PLVS . GRAND . CVEVR .
QVE . ONCQUE . DAME . EVT . AV MVNDE .
ANNE . FVT . LE NOM . DELLE
EN FRANCE . DEUX . FOIS . ROINE
DVCHESSE . DES . BRETONS .
ROYALE . ET . SOVVERAINE .

C

M . V . XIII .

And on the other side :—

CE . CVEVR . FVT . SI . TRES : HAVLT
QVE DE . LA . TERRE . AVX . CIEVLX
SA . VERTY . LIBERALLE
ACCROISSOIT . MIEVLX ET MIEVLX
MAIS . DIEV EN . A . REPRISES .
SA . PORTION . MEILLEVRE
ET . CESTE . PART . TERRESTRE
EN GRAND . DEVIL . NOVS . DEMEVRE
IX IANVIER .

There is a great desire on the part of the Nantais to have this box placed on the tomb in which it was formerly enclosed ; and I was informed, this will be done when the buildings now in progress are completed. The present transept is said to occupy the site of the altar of the Pagan Temple of Bol Janus,

which, according to a Manuscript of Albert Morlaix, was served by twelve Druids.

The façade of the Cathedral is pierced by three lofty and deeply-recessed portals, crusted with statues and ornaments. Here the architect has shown his appreciation of the power of soaring arches, such as befit the principal entrance to a mighty cathedral. Nor were appropriate brass gates wanting. These however, which are said to have been extremely beautiful, were melted by the iconoclasts. One small portion alone was saved; this bears an inscription in old French, to the effect that the gates were set up in the year 1519,—

“ Pour décorer ce portail et chef-d’œuvre
Comme pourront cognaitre les passants,
Car par nous richement se ferme et ouvre.”

A fine walk extends behind the Cathedral between the rivers Loire and Erdre, where the Nantais take their pleasure, Paris-fashion, under the spreading trees. If you hire a *valet-de-place*, he will be sure to take you to one end of this walk, and show you a large and handsome house which was occupied by the demon Carrier, who bequeathed it to his bloody mistress; and you will also be taken to the spot where the guillotine deluged the ground with blood during the Revolution. A more impressive memorial of that terrible period may be seen on the banks of the

Loire, some two miles below the heart of the city. Who is there that does not remember the harrowing account of the *noyades* of Nantes? The way to the house where the poor wretches were imprisoned before being drowned, lies along the quays, bristling with ships and lined by lofty houses, not like those

“Fabrics of lath which flourish or which fade;

Bob Nash may make them, as Bob Nash has made;”

but solid stone constructions which give dignity and grandeur to a city. In truth it is worth passing along the quays, if only to obtain a just conception of the extent and nature of the mercantile business of Nantes. You will see ships bound for all climes ; goods of all kinds, machine-shops, steam-engine works, vast ship-building yards, and in short all the features of a great commercial and manufacturing city. Pass on, and amidst all this prosperity you will be struck by seeing a stone house, of sombre hue and of great extent, standing like a thing accursed, surrounded by the healthy pulses of life : bustling commerce flows to its walls, but awakens no life within it. The present seems to shun a thing so dark, and no wonder. The Salorges, as the place is called, is a name full of horror. An inclined plane leads from the front of the building to the river ; down this the victims were driven, and forced into boats moored to receive them. These, freighted with

their human cargoes, were towed into the stream and scuttled ; and that none might escape, men were stationed in boats and on shore to strike down the strong swimmers. There is a story told of a man who was employed at this horrid work going mad in after-years. In his seasons of delirium he saw heads constantly rising around him,

“With twenty mortal murders on their crowns.”

In vain did he strike at them—still they rose glaring on him, head succeeding head, until he shrieked in his mental agony. What a picture is this of the not less awful reality,—men, women, and innocent children murdered without mercy ! “Ce sont des louvetaux, il faut les détruire,—des vipères, il faut les étouffer,” was Carrier’s answer when implored to excrcise a little mercy. And to these *noyades en masse* were added the *mariages républicains*, which consisted in binding a man and woman back to back, and, after exposing them naked for an hour in front of the Salorges, casting them into the *Baignoire Nationale*, as the Loire was called.

You will contemplate the Loire at this locality with greater interest when you remember the disastrous retreat of the Royalists subsequent to the siege of Nantes. The attack of this city has been considered by many experienced Generals as the most important military event of the great French Revolution. For

had the city fallen, all Brittany would have risen in arms, and English troops would have landed unopposed on her coasts; but the Nantais preferred espousing the cause of the Revolutionists, little dreaming that their mistaken patriotism would be rewarded by the *noyades*.

Nantes has certainly no reason to be proud of her history: the infamous Revocation of the famous Edict, and the scenes enacted during the Revolution, are hideous blots, happily almost unparalleled in treachery and atrocity.

It was pleasant to turn from the Salorges, which is a Pariah among buildings, into the current of life; and to change the scene effectually, I visited one of the large provision-preserving establishments, for which Nantes is celebrated. Placing my introductory note in the hands of the foreman, I was conducted into a vast apartment provided with a great number of boilers, where many varieties of meat, fruit, and vegetables were undergoing steaming, preparatory to being packed in tins and glass vessels. The famous sardines form however the staple stock of the *Conserves Alimentaires*, as they are called. These fish undergo the first curative process at L'Orient, where a hundred and fifty women are employed, by the establishment I visited, in taking out the entrails and divesting them of their heads and tails. They are then

boiled in oil, and eight hundred persons are engaged during the season in packing them. You are conducted through shining lanes of tin-cases containing these fish, which are constantly changing hands, as the house of Messrs. Colin alone sells 900,000 boxes of sardines annually. Other rooms contain preserved meats, soups, vegetables, and fruits, in such profusion, that it seems as if Nantes could sustain a siege for years without further provisions than those stored in the warehouses of the *Conserves Alimentaires*.

Although Nantes has the air of a modern city, yet if you worm your way into its heart, you will find a labyrinth of dark and dirty streets ; one, the Rue de la Poissonnerie, contains, among a great number of very curious old houses, the most remarkable dwelling in Nantes ; it is called the “Maison des Enfans Nantais,” and dates from the fifteenth century. The façade is particularly rich. Within a niche, on a level with the first floor, are two figures representing St. Donatien and St. Rogatien, patrons of Nantes. The ancient custom of crowning these figures annually with flowers on the anniversary of *Fête Dieu* is still observed. This very picturesque building should not be overlooked by the artist ; but indeed a portfolio may be filled with sketches of old buildings in Nantes ; and the sketcher who loves privacy will be pleased to hear that he will not be such

an object of curiosity in this large bustling city as in the smaller towns of Brittany,—at least I was permitted to work in peace.

Chief of the ancient structures in Nantes is the venerable castle, with its stern towers and flanking bastions, the foundations of which date from the year 840. Here it was that Henri IV. signed the famous Edict, exclaiming, as he entered the vast fortress, “*Ventre Saint-Gris, les Ducs de Bretagne n'étaient pas de petits compagnons!*”

The present building shows, by its fragmentary character, how grievously it has suffered from sieges. Indeed few castles in Brittany have undergone such vicissitudes as that of Nantes. Many French Kings held their Court within the vast walls, and Napoleon made the castle his head-quarters in 1808.

Recent alterations, in connection with the railway, which passes under the south bastions, disclosed a very fine round tower within a quadrangular building. The existence of this internal structure was unknown, and no clue was gained respecting the date of its construction. A memorial to Government for its preservation was successful, and the projected course of the railway was altered. The chapel in which Anne of Brittany was married to Louis XII. is shown; but although the Duchess was undoubtedly born and resided for a long time in the castle, it is

by no means certain that she was married in the chapel, or in any portion of the building.

The guide will also show you dark dungeons which have been occupied by many illustrious prisoners, and the room in which the Duchess of Berri was confined, after having been captured in a semi-roasted state in a house in the adjoining Rue Haut du Château. The hollow place behind the grate, where she and her two friends remained concealed for sixteen hours, still exists; but so many persons applied to see the hiding-place, that the proprietor of the house only shows it now to intimate friends.

I closed a day of rather laborious sight-seeing by a visit to the theatre, a very handsome building, where I heard the Opera of 'Robert le Diable' admirably performed. The orchestra and *mise en scène* were excellent, and the price of my pit-stall, a comfortable cushioned armchair, only one franc and a half.

Looking round at the fine and spacious *salle*, which reminded me of a metropolitan Opera-house, I thought of Young's remark, when enjoying an opera in this theatre in 1789:—"Arrive at Nantes; go to the theatre, new-built of fine white stone, and has a magnificent portico-front of eight elegant Corinthian pillars; within, all is gold and painting, and a *coup d'œil* at entering that struck me forcibly. It is, I believe, twice as large as Drury-lane, and five times

more magnificent. It was full ; *Mon Dieu !* cried I to myself, do all the wastes, the deserts, the heaths, ling, furze, broom, and bog, that I have passed for three hundred miles, lead to this spectacle ? What a miracle, that all this splendour and wealth of the cities in France should be so unconnected with the country ! ”*

So is it still ; and if Arthur Young could revisit Brittany, he would find, that while Nantes has made prodigious strides, so as to become one of the greatest and wealthiest cities in France, Brittany generally is nearly as uncultivated and wild as it was in his time. A writer on the rural economy of France has well said, “ The stability of the political institutions of the country may be more powerfully affected by an insect in a blade of wheat, than by all the magnificence which surrounds the throne ; and if a larger proportion of that intelligence and capital, which are profusely expended in France upon the decorative and unproductive arts, could be turned to the elementary purpose of procuring food and clothing, on the most advantageous terms, for the service of man, Louis Napoleon might be surrounded by a less luxurious Court, but he would rule over a more prosperous and contented people.”

But however much the agriculturist may deplore

* ‘Travels in France,’ vol. i. p. 89.

the existing state of things in Brittany, the wild and uncultivated character of the country will not be a source of regret to the picturesque-loving tourist.

The following morning I was roused early by noisy preparations for the *fête*,—workmen busy in all directions, putting up flags, lamps, and lanterns. I remarked that amidst a multitude of banners floating from our hotel windows, that of England was not included. The omission was not flattering to national vanity; so I made acquaintance with the landlord, and prevailed on him to exhibit the Union Jack of Great Britain in companionship with the ensigns of France, Sardinia, and Turkey. The fact was, that at Nantes, as in other parts of France, a very general belief prevailed that our army had done little or nothing in the Crimea, and that the taking of Sebastopol was almost entirely due to the valour of French troops. So here again I found that the English press had given our brave Allies an idea of our army which, to say the least, was far from complimentary to us. It is so easy to colour and warp facts by picturesque writing, which many of “Our Correspondents” unfortunately prefer to the truthful style of conventional coldness characterizing Gazette despatches.

Long before twelve o’clock, the time announced for the performance of the Te Deum in the Cathedral,

the doors were besieged by crowds. At that hour the civil and military authorities, preceded and followed by large bodies of troops, entered the building, and when they had taken their places the public were admitted. By the courtesy of an officer I procured a good seat, from whence I saw the ceremonies at the high altar, which were conducted by the Bishop and gorgeously-robed priests. On the elevation of the Host, the Commander of the troops, who was stationed in front of the altar, ordered the soldiers, in a stentorian voice, to present arms. Then the choir, accompanied by the noble organ and a numerous orchestra, sang the *Te Deum* in a manner which made me regret that it could not be encored.

At the conclusion the Bishop pronounced a blessing, and the vast multitude within the Cathedral poured forth to spend the rest of the day in pleasure. The authorities had ordered two gratuitous representations at the theatre ; and the night was made brilliant by a general illumination and fireworks. Besides the usual gas-jets and lamps, quaintly-shaped lanterns, of various bright colours, were hung out, exhibiting humorous devices and *bon-mots* on the war, not complimentary to Russia. The streets were crowded with peasants to a very late hour ; but although every one abandoned himself to amusement, I did not observe a single drunkard.

The following day I bade adieu to Brittany, and, pausing for a couple of days at Angers and Blois to see the fine castles in those interesting towns, continued my journey to Paris, and reached my London home at the end of September, bearing with me a delightful remembrance of my Tour in what must be considered one of the most interesting and picturesque parts of France.



JOHN EDWARD TAYLOR, PRINTER,
LITTLE QUEEN STREET, LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS.

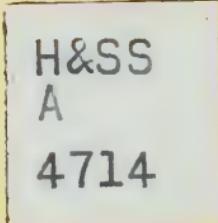


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